

Agenda

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 16 May 2018, 10.00 am
County Hall, Worcester

All County Councillors are invited to attend and participate

This document can be provided in alternative formats such as Large Print, an audio recording or Braille; it can also be emailed as a Microsoft Word attachment. Please contact Democratic Services on telephone number 01905 844963 or by emailing democraticservices@worcestershire.gov.uk

DISCLOSING INTERESTS

There are now 2 types of interests:
'Disclosable pecuniary interests' and **'other disclosable interests'**

WHAT IS A 'DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST' (DPI)?

- Any **employment**, office, trade or vocation carried on for profit or gain
- **Sponsorship** by a 3rd party of your member or election expenses
- Any **contract** for goods, services or works between the Council and you, a firm where you are a partner/director, or company in which you hold shares
- Interests in **land** in Worcestershire (including licence to occupy for a month or longer)
- **Shares** etc (with either a total nominal value above £25,000 or 1% of the total issued share capital) in companies with a place of business or land in Worcestershire.

NB Your DPIs include the interests of your spouse/partner as well as you

WHAT MUST I DO WITH A DPI?

- **Register** it within 28 days and
- **Declare** it where you have a DPI in a matter at a particular meeting
 - you must **not participate** and you **must withdraw**.

NB It is a criminal offence to participate in matters in which you have a DPI

WHAT ABOUT 'OTHER DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS'?

- No need to register them but
- You must **declare** them at a particular meeting where:
You/your family/person or body with whom you are associated have
a **pecuniary interest** in or **close connection** with the matter under discussion.

WHAT ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OF ANOTHER AUTHORITY OR PUBLIC BODY?

You will not normally even need to declare this as an interest. The only exception is where the conflict of interest is so significant it is seen as likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

DO I HAVE TO WITHDRAW IF I HAVE A DISCLOSABLE INTEREST WHICH ISN'T A DPI?

Not normally. You must withdraw only if it:

- affects your **pecuniary interests** **OR**
relates to a **planning or regulatory** matter
- **AND** it is seen as likely to **prejudice your judgement** of the public interest.

DON'T FORGET

- If you have a disclosable interest at a meeting you must **disclose both its existence and nature** – 'as noted/recorded' is insufficient
- **Declarations must relate to specific business** on the agenda
 - General scattergun declarations are not needed and achieve little
- Breaches of most of the **DPI provisions** are now **criminal offences** which may be referred to the police which can on conviction by a court lead to fines up to £5,000 and disqualification up to 5 years
- Formal **dispensation** in respect of interests can be sought in appropriate cases.

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 16 May 2018, 10.00 am, County Hall, Worcester

Membership

Councillors:

Mrs F M Oborski (Chairman), Mrs J A Potter (Vice Chairman), Ms P Agar, Mr T Baker-Price, Mr R W Banks, Ms R L Dent, Mr P M McDonald, Mr S M Mackay and Ms T L Onslow

Co-opted Church Representatives (for education matters)

Bryan Allbut (Church of England)

Parent Governor Representatives (for education matters)

Ms C Richardson (Parent Governor) and Vacancy

Agenda

Item No	Subject	Page No
1	Apologies and Welcome	
2	Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip	
3	Public Participation Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in writing or by e-mail indicating the nature and content of their proposed participation no later than 9.00am on the working day before the meeting (in this case 15 May 2018). Enquiries can be made through the telephone number/e-mail address below.	
4	Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting (previously circulated)	
5	Children's Social Care Service - Ofsted Monitoring Visit Feedback	1 - 6
6	Special Education Needs/Disabilities Strategy	7 - 50

Agenda produced and published by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP. To obtain further information or hard copies of this agenda, please contact Alyson Grice 01905 844962/Samantha Morris 01905 844963 email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

All the above reports and supporting information can be accessed via the Council's website [here](#)

Date of Issue: Tuesday, 8 May 2018

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 16 MAY 2018

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICE – OFSTED MONITORING VISIT FEEDBACK

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Assistant Director Safeguarding Services (Children's Social Care) have been invited to the meeting to provide an update on the outcome of Ofsted's fourth Monitoring Visit of the Council's children's safeguarding services, which took place on the 18 and 19 April and focused on the progress of children in care, in particular placement stability and achieving permanence for young people aged over 16. Additionally, Ofsted reviewed the quality of practice in the Care Leaver's Service.

Background

2. On 24 January 2017, Ofsted published their report entitled 'Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers; and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board'.

3. The overall judgement for Worcestershire was 'inadequate'. Following the Ofsted judgement, an eight-point Service Improvement Plan (SIP) was developed by Children, Families and Communities Leadership Team to cover all of the recommendations made by Ofsted.

4. As a result of this judgement, Ofsted put in place a series of Monitoring Visits to track the Council's progress. To date there have been four such visits in September 2017 and January, April and May 2017. The result of the first visit was not published but Ofsted concluded that the Local Authority was not making the expected progress to improve services for children and young people. In the following two visits, however, Ofsted noted that progress was being made.

Feedback from Ofsted Monitoring Visit – No.4

5. Ofsted conducted their fourth Monitoring Visit on 18 and 19 April 2018, with the focus being on the new Through Care Service and placement stability, permanence and care leavers. Alison Smale, Senior Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) from Ofsted, led the inspection working alongside fellow Ofsted inspector, Andy Waugh (HMI), and observed by Steve Lowe, a newly appointed HMI, as part of his induction to role.

6. Ofsted will publish their letter outlining the results of the visit on 14 May 2018. The purpose of each letter following an Ofsted Monitoring Visit is to outline the outcome of the visit. There are no judgements made, but instead a statement

summarising the direction of travel. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix 1 (to follow).

Next Steps

7. The next Ofsted Monitoring Visit (No. 5) is currently scheduled to take place on 11 and 12 July 2018 and is likely to focus on the work of our Locality Safeguarding Teams.

8. The Children, Families and Communities Leadership Team (CFCLT) has the SIP, to ensure it continues to remain focused on the right priorities and is reflective of all feedback received in our improvement journey, including Ofsted, our Children's Commissioner and Essex County Council, our Improvement Partner. A high level version of the plan is attached at Appendix 2.

9. The SIP will continue to be reviewed regularly, with progress reports provided to key stakeholders and partners including the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), Elected Members and Scrutiny Panels, whilst we continue to work with Essex County Council.

10. CFCLT will continue to lead the delivery of the SIP and ensure positive momentum is maintained whilst the implementation phase of the Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) is underway in parallel.

Purpose of the Meeting

11. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider the information in the report and the presentation to be provided on the day
- determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Ofsted Monitoring Visit Outcome Letter (to follow)
- Appendix 2 – Service Improvement Plan 2018-19

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

Worcestershire County Council 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Specific Contact Points for this report

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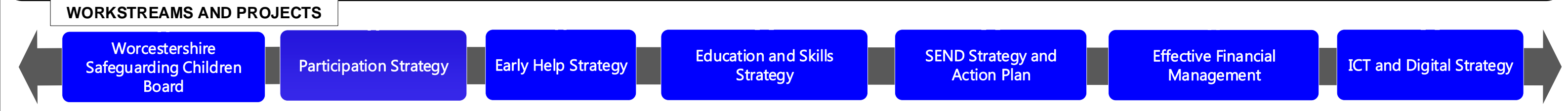
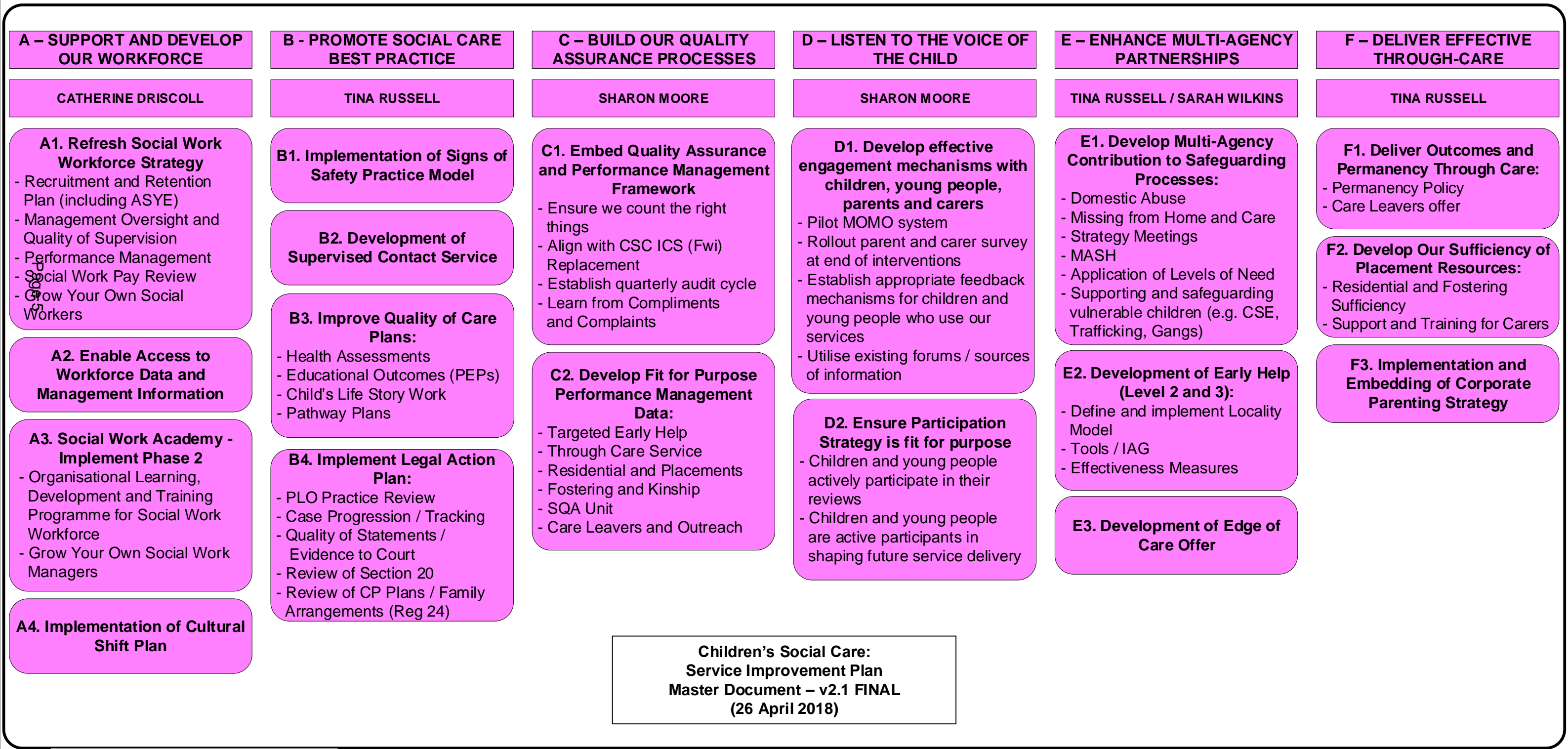
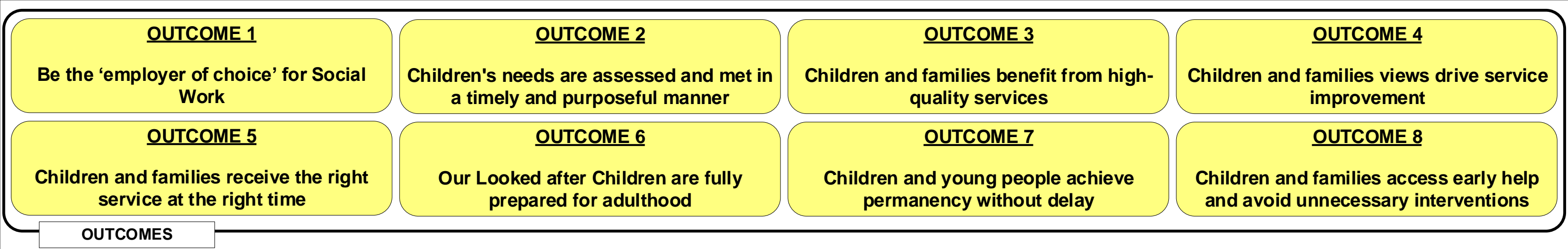
Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities) the following background papers relate to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and background papers for the meetings of the Cabinet held on 2 February 2017, 6 April 2017 and 28 September 2017
- Agenda and background papers for the meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 13 March 2017, 14 August 2017, 24 October 2017 and 22 March 2018

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

16 MAY 2018

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS/DISABILITIES STRATEGY

Summary

1. The Special Education Needs/Disabilities Strategy (Appendix 1) was approved by the Health and Well-Being Board on the 5 December 2017 and the Cabinet on 8 February 2018. The Strategy seeks to improve health, education and care outcomes for children & young people with a special educational need and/or a disability (SEND). This is a key priority of the Children & Young People's Plan (CYPP) and is dependent on, and expecting of, effective partnership collaboration between strategic health bodies, schools and the Local Authority (LA). It will drive greater integration of services in a co-productive approach that will:

- Identify children and young people with SEND
- Assess and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, through a Graduated Approachⁱ
- Provide support and services that effectively meet needs and improve the outcomes of those with SEND

2. To inform the development of the Strategy and review the provision in the local area for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities a Peer Review was commissioned from the Local Government Association (LGA) (Appendix 2). The Peer Review took place between the 4 and 7 December 2017. The Peer Review Team interviewed officers, visited settings and reviewed the Strategy, self-assessment and draft action plans.

3. A Joint Local Area SEND Inspection was carried out by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) between the 5 March and 9 March 2018. Publication of the inspection letter is expected week beginning the 6 May 2018 (Appendix 3 to follow). The findings of the Joint Inspection remain draft and confidential until publication.

Background

4. Local authorities and partners ⁱⁱmust have regard to the SEND Code of Practice (January 2015) which provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations. It relates to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabled children and young people up to the age of 25.

5. The purpose of the Worcestershire's SEND Strategy is to deliver the local partners statutory duties by setting out a case for change and improvement. Five

Strategic Priorities were identified as part of the development of the SEND Strategy they are:

- (i) A Person – Centred Approach - recognises the strengths and abilities of individuals and put them at the centre of planning and decision making about their own care and support.
- (ii) Integration and Operational Delivery - develop a local approach that integrates our assessment and planning process and to ensure services for children with SEND and their families are coordinated.
- (iii) Early Intervention - support children to have the best start in life and ensure children and young people and their families can access help when they need it.
- (iv) Preparation for Adulthood - take a whole life approach, which starts at birth, to improve the personal transition experience and journey to adulthood for children and young people with SEND and their families.
- (v) Workforce Development - Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and partners to develop a workforce development programme that will result in a confident multi-agency workforce that understand SEND, that is able to work together, shares a vision for those with SEND and achieves good outcomes.

6. These priorities form part of a plan to drive a programme of work that will be overseen by representatives of the accountable bodies through the SEND Improvement Board reporting to the Health & Well-being Board.

Purpose of the Meeting

7. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider the SEND Strategy, the LGA Peer Review and the feedback from the Joint Local Area SEND Inspection carried out by Ofsted and the CQC
- determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 - Worcestershire Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2017-2021
- Appendix 2 - Worcestershire County Council SEND Peer Review 4th – 7th December 2017 Feedback Report
- Appendix 3 - Joint Local Area SEND Inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission Outcome Letter (to follow)

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

i **Graduated Approach:** A model of action and intervention in early education settings, schools and colleges to help children and young people who have special educational needs. The approach recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs and that, where necessary, increasing specialist expertise should be brought to bear on the difficulties that a child or young person may be experiencing.

ii **The SEND Code of Practice** is statutory guidance for the following organisations:

- local authorities (education, social care and relevant housing and employment and other services)
- the governing bodies of schools, including non-maintained special schools
- the governing bodies of further education colleges and sixth form colleges
- the proprietors of academies (including free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools)
- the management committees of pupil referral units
- independent schools and independent specialist providers approved under Section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014
- all early years providers in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors that are funded by the local authority
- the National Health Service Commissioning Board
- clinical commissioning groups (CCGs)
- NHS Trusts
- NHS Foundation Trusts
- Local Health Boards
- Youth Offending Teams and relevant youth custodial establishments
- The First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) (see v.)

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Worcestershire Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

2017-2021



Document Control

Version Control			
Version	Who	Date	Amendments
0.1	Sarah Wilkins	07-11-2017	Draft
0.2	Board	21-11-2017	General changes to body of document
0.3	Katie Collins	30-11-2017	Additional Comments
0.4	Katie Collins	08-01-2018	Final Amends for Cabinet
1.0 - Final	Anna Field	29-01-2018	Amend to para 2.1 ahead of Cabinet

Document Control	
Worcestershire Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	
V1.0 - Final	Owner: Nick Wilson
Date Approved: HWB Board Approval 5 th December 2017 Cabinet Approval - TBC	Status: Final
Effective date: TBC	Approved by: SEND Improvement Board (14 th December)
Superseded: v0.4 Draft	Next review date: 12mths from Cabinet Approval

Foreword

Welcome to the Worcestershire Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for the period 2017 -2021.

This Strategy comes at a time of unprecedented challenge for all services that work with children, young people and families in Worcestershire. The Children with SEND Improvement Board is committed to making the experience of childhood and early adulthood a good one.

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) deserve to be supported and encouraged to reach their full potential including, where possible, living independent lives. They also deserve to receive help and support from good quality services. We believe that by working together with families and communities we will achieve this.

Critical to the success of the Strategy is the important role parents and carers have in their responsibilities to shape the experience of their children and young people. Partners in Worcestershire need parents, carers and communities to work with them to build aspirations and resilience.

The SEND Board Partnership will work with parents and carers to support their goals for their children and young people to grow into independent adults that are able to make positive contributions to society.

Worcestershire will be inspected under the SEND Local Area inspection framework, by the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted and we know that we need to improve our ways of working and offer to be more effective in supporting families. We also need to recognise and build on our strengths that work well for families.

This Strategy sets out partnership duties and will be delivered through an action plan that will be overseen by the Children with SEND Improvement Board. We will review the Strategy and the action plan on an annual basis to ensure that we remain focussed on the right things and improve outcomes for children and young people in Worcestershire.



M. J. Hart

Cllr Marcus Hart
Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education and Skills

27th November 2017



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Worcestershire is ambitious for all children and young people and has set out a challenging agenda through its Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2017-2021: Putting children at the heart of everything we do. Taking the lead from the CYPP, the vision is for 'Worcestershire to be a wonderful place for all children and young people to grow up'. We believe it is important that all children and young people:-

- Are safe from harm
- Reach their full potential
- Make a positive contribution in their communities
- Live healthy, happy and fun filled lives

1.2 Improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, which includes those with a special educational need and/or a disability (SEND), is a key priority within the CYPP and is dependent on, and expecting of, effective partnership collaboration between strategic health bodies and the Local Authority (LA).

1.3 Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) deserve to be supported and encouraged to reach their full potential including, where possible, living independent lives. They also deserve to receive help and support from good quality services.

1.4 We know that we need to strengthen, develop and deliver services to meet the needs of children, young people with SEND and their parents and carers. The CYPP has committed to strengthening the focus on prevention and early intervention and to reforming services to improve outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

1.5 A total of 116,050 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Worcestershire (ONS 2016 mid-year estimates). This is approximately 20% of the total population in the area.

1.6 Early years census data (January 2017) shows us that there are 8244 2 to 4 year olds identified as having SEN support needs in Worcestershire.

1.7 School census data (January 2017) show us that there were 10,863 children and young people in Worcestershire identified as having SEN support needs. This is 12.5% of the school population and is higher than the national average (11.6%). In



addition to this 2381 children and young people had an Education Health and Care Plan or Statement of Educational Need (2016/17 August data).

1.8 The school census data for Worcestershire shows there is a higher proportion of children who have Speech, Language and Communications needs than nationally, and a lower proportion with Autistic Spectrum Disorder or who have a Moderate Learning Difficulty. The numbers of children and young people with SEN needs are highest in Wyre Forest and Wychavon Districts, however the percentage of children with SEN needs are highest in Wyre Forest and Redditch Districts. Over the next 20 years to 2037, the numbers of children and young people with SEN needs is forecast to rise by 4.3% (483).

1.9 The purpose of this Strategy is to set out the case for change and how we plan to respond through five key priorities. It will drive an ambitious programme of work that will be overseen by representatives of the accountable bodies through a Strategic Board and will change the ways in which we work with children, young people, parents/carers, and as professionals together. It will involve greater integration of services in a co-productive approach that will:

- Identify children and young people with SEND
- Assess and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, through a Graduated Approachⁱ
- Provide support and services that effectively meet needs and improve the outcomes of those with SEND

2. THE FINANCIAL CONTEXT

2.1 In the current economic climate public services are under financial pressure as almost never before. The Government's strategy to manage the deficit has serious implications for public sector funding.

2.2 These financial constraints require us to reduce bureaucracy and increase effectiveness to ensure that provision targets children and young people to best effect.

2.3 From 1st April 2013 the Government changed the way in which all schools, including academies, are funded for SEN provision. The intention of this funding reform was to:



- simplify the way Local Authorities and the Education and Skills Funding Agency fund schools and academies for SEND so that it is more consistent and better focused on the needs of pupils
- create greater consistency between local funding formulae the core place funding by setting this at £10,000 per commissioned place for all LAs
- require LAs to introduce local 'top up' funding arrangements to support the needs of those children and young people requiring more than the place funding and for this to move in 'real time'

2.4 Each year the County Council receives a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from Government which provides the overwhelming majority of funding for all schools. This grant comprises three blocks in 2017-18 these totalled £384.1m gross; £214.5m net after ESFA academy recoupment. This comprises: -

- The Schools Block (£307.6m gross; £146.5m net)
- The High Needs Block (£48.1m gross; £39.6m net)
- The Early Years Block (£28.4m gross and £28.4m net - no ESFA recoupment)

2.5 This for schools and high needs is currently based on historic factors and levels of funding and Worcestershire County Council (WCC) has always been in a low funded position compared to other LAs. The DfE policy of a National Funding Formula (NFF) for the DSG will result in more grant but this does not take account of pupil basic need increases and significant demand and need pressures for SEND. WCC is experiencing significant cost pressures and demand for more commissioned places from its specialist providers.

2.6 As a result of the Government funding reform, mainstream schools now receive funding for pupils with special and additional educational needs from two sources. The majority of funding is delegated to schools from the Schools Block Notional SEN with 'top up' funding for individual pupils with high level, low incidence SEN provided via the High Needs block.

2.7 The DfE requirements provided for the Schools Block delegation to mainstream schools to provide for the first £6,000 of support for all pupils with special educational needs from the Schools Block through its normal local funding formula. This is in addition to the basic Key Stage Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) funding (WCC 2017-18 Primary £2,858; KS3 £3,909; KS4 £4,438) allocated per pupil. Mainstream Schools are required to fund the first £6,000 of provision identified for each child with a statement of special educational needs that is over and above what a school would reasonably be expected to meet from their Key Stage funding. Any additional cost



over £6,000 is provided to the school by the County Council from the High Needs Block as top up funding. Where the child is not resident in Worcestershire, any top-up funding is provided by the home authority and vice versa for Worcestershire pupils in other LA provision. All mainstream schools including academies are expected to use their delegated budget to deliver high quality outcomes for all children including those with Special Educational Needs or Disability.

- 2.8** Special schools including special academies are funded at £10,000 per commissioned place from the High Needs Block (being the equivalent of the £6,000 per pupil delegated to mainstream schools plus the equivalent Key Stage funding). A significant sum of over 20% of the net High Needs Block is used to support a number of SEND children placed in independent schools and post 16 providers – there is a significant cost pressure in these areas.
- 2.9** A sum of around £0.5m is allocated from the High Needs Block Early Years block to support Early Years SEN and a further £0.2m is allocated from the High Needs Block to support exceptional notional SEN pressures in mainstream schools.
- 2.10** Alongside the DSG funding, Worcestershire allocates £11.6m of its base budget towards SEND services and supporting children and young people with SEND. This includes educational psychology services which are contracted out to our education service provider, inclusion and assessment services, commissioning of specialist placements, transport for children to attend school, support for children in residential or short breaks provision, post 16 assessment and placements, as well as social work support, home care and day care for children with disabilities.

3. OUR VISION

3.1 'In Worcestershire we want all children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities to be truly seen and respected as individuals and to be the best they can be.'

3.2 How will we achieve our vision?

In Worcestershire, we will all work together to enable children and young people to:

- be independent: not because they can do everything for themselves, but to have control over their lives and how they live them
- live where they choose and with people they choose
- have leisure interests and hobbies that will enhance their life skills, their creativity and be fun and for these interests to be in ordinary places in and with their community



- have the opportunity to learn and to keep learning, both within a supportive and appropriate educational environment which meets their needs and outside school
- manage the many transitions in their lives with appropriate support
- prepare and move into meaningful and worthwhile work as adults - be it paid employment, their own business or any activity that supports them to contribute to their community life
- have the information and support they need to make positive informed choices and decisions about their lives
- be and feel safe - at home and in their community
- be confident and have the opportunity to say what they think or want
- have a network of meaningful friendships and relationships
- be truly seen as individuals and respected and celebrated for who they are
- be and stay healthy
- have a strong voice, alongside the strong voice of families

4. CASE FOR CHANGE

4.1 The Strategic Partnership believe that every Worcestershire child and young person with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) really does matter. This means that they all should have their needs met, as far as possible, in the local community, in local early year's providersⁱⁱ, local schools, in local further education collegesⁱⁱⁱ and work places. We also believe that they should have access to good quality provision which ensures good health, care and educational outcomes in order to reach their full potential including, where possible, living independent lives.

4.2 Through listening events and wider engagement work with children, young people and their parents / carers we have been told that families have to struggle to access the right services in a well-coordinated way and parents / carers want to have better information and support in order that they are better equipped to meet their child's needs. Families, schools and other professionals have commented that some children could be better supported in education provision nearer to home but are needing to access specialist and alternative education provision. We need to work in partnership to ensure that the right skills and support are available in local schools as well as having high quality specialist provision when this is required as part of a Graduated Response.



5. NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

5.3 The SEND Code of Practice provides statutory guidance for organisations who work with children and young people with SEND and their families. The following organisations must fulfil their statutory duties in light of the guidance;

³ SEND Code of practice: 0 to 25 years



- Local Authorities (education, social care and other services)
- The governing bodies of schools (including non-maintained special schools), further education colleges and sixth form colleges
- The proprietors of academies^{iv} (including free schools)
- The management committees of pupil referral units^v
- Independent schools^{vi} and independent specialist providers approved under Section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014
- All early years providers^{vii} that are funded by the LA
- NHS England^{viii}
- Clinical Commissioning Groups^{ix} (CCGs)
- NHS Trusts^x
- NHS Foundation Trusts^{xi}
- Local Health and Wellbeing Boards^{xii}
- Youth Offending Teams^{xiii} and relevant youth custodial establishments

5.4 The Care Act (2014)⁴ supports parent carers of disabled children and young people and the transition of young people into work/adult life in such a way as to promote their independence and so reduce their long term needs for care and support.

6. RIGHT PROVISION, IN THE RIGHT PLACE, AT THE RIGHT TIME

6.1 Early Identification and Intervention

6.1.1 Successive evidence highlights the importance of prevention and early intervention to improve outcomes. Worcestershire applies a prevention policy to its work which aims to **prevent** the need for care before it occurs, **reduce** the impact of problems which have occurred, by detecting risk and problems as soon as possible, and intervening early to limit their impact. And to **delay** the need for further help, and avoid crises, by getting the right help to people who already have needs and giving the right support to prevent those needs escalating.

6.1.2 The overall aim of early intervention/help means identifying risks and need as early as possible, providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years and early

⁴ Care Act 2014



adulthood. Providing the right help at the earliest opportunity can help to solve problems before they become more pressing and complex, and may avert the need for statutory interventions at a later stage (ref Worcestershire EH Strategy 2017⁵)

- 6.1.3** An effective early intervention system is made up of service users, community resources, universal service providers and targeted services, working together to enable families to manage their own situations and solve their own problems.
- 6.1.4** Early intervention should focus on strengths and co-production that empowers a family to make whatever changes are necessary to secure the well-being of their children, enabling appropriate risk management in the community and a proportionate response to risk and need.
- 6.1.5** This strategy aligns to the Early Help Strategy and the Worcestershire partnership commitment to strengthening its Early Help^{xiv} system which will result in more children, young people and families being able to access services as early as they can in their local communities wherever possible.

6.2 High Needs' Commissioning

- 6.2.1** In September 2016 WCC began a High Needs' Commissioning Review (HNCR) to assess the processes and the suitability of provision in place for those Children and Young People (CYP) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This review sets out the commissioning approach from WCC for children and young people in receipt of High Needs' Funding.
- 6.2.2** The review was both internal and external in focus, and incorporated significant work on joint commissioning between Education, Early Help, Social Care and Community Health. This joint High Needs' Review is the culmination of work across the Children, Families and Communities Directorate, led by Education and Skills, on how to best meet the joint needs for CYP in Worcestershire.
- 6.2.3** This document establishes:
 - How we will contribute to achieving our priorities and plans for Special Educational Needs in meeting the need of our communities
 - The link between the Council's statutory duties, regulatory requirements, needs assessments and the Council's resources

⁵ WSCB Early Help Strategy



- The outcomes of our review of current service provision and the requirements we have established, which will underpin and help prioritise resource allocation decisions

6.2.4 A significant aspect of the review was to assess need and provision requirements for Students with Special Educational Needs, and whether we had sufficient and suitable provision that was accessible in Worcestershire. These findings are set out in the High Needs Review document along with our intended actions for implementation.

6.2.5 We also looked at how we commission places and the most efficient and transparent ways of achieving this. One key priority for this area of work has been to put in place meaningful annual discussions with all our Schools and Settings in receipt of High Needs' Funding at the right time of the new commissioning cycle.

6.2.6 Reform of process on its own cannot be enough to deliver a better system of provision for our most vulnerable children and young people, but it is a vital part in that programme of change and improvement. We are confident that the proposals set out in High Needs Review will give all those involved in supporting young people and children with high needs the best opportunity to help to make a positive impact to their lives.

6.3 SEN in Schools / College – 0 to 25 years

6.3.1 Most children and young people will be able to thrive in their local community following appropriate adjustments to meet their needs stemming from SEND. However, some children's needs are highly complex and will benefit from a higher level of intervention, provided in a more specialist setting.

6.3.2 In Worcestershire a set of policies and descriptors of needs have been set out with the intention of supporting educational settings in identifying and meeting needs, and to access specialist help consistently. This is known locally as the 'Graduated Response'.

6.4 Worcestershire's Local Offer

6.4.1 Local authorities are required to publish a Local Offer^{xv}, setting out in one place information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.



- 6.4.2** Our Local Offer website requires improvement. Work is underway to site the Local Offer within the wider Your Life, Your Choice website. This should result in a comprehensive site that aims to provide information to families about the provision available across Education, Health and Social Care for all children and young people with SEND.

7. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 7.1** Central to the development of this Strategy are the views of children, young people, their parents and carers and practitioners. We have carried out stakeholder engagement and consultation activities throughout 2016/17 and combined this feedback with our data to identify five Strategic Priorities. Achieving these priorities will require all stakeholders to commit to new ways of working. All five priorities will include a strong focus on co-production, use of data, building a confident and capable workforce, personalisation and innovation. The priorities will receive endorsement and commitment at a senior level across Health, Social Care and Education. The partnership will also ensure that elected members understand the arrangements, strengths and aspects of development for SEND across Worcestershire. We will work together across Education, Health and Social Care to be clear about our joint commissioning arrangements and pathways.

- 7.2** The five priorities are:

- (1)** A Person – Centred Approach
- (2)** Integration and Operational Delivery
- (3)** Early Intervention
- (4)** Preparation for Adulthood
- (5)** Workforce Development

7.3 Priority 1: A Person – Centred Approach

- 7.3.1** Children and young people with special educational needs and or disabilities are children and young people first. We need to recognise the strengths and abilities of individuals and put them at the centre of planning and decision making about their own care and support.
- 7.3.2** The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have an aligned vision of personalisation, participation and choice and control where the views, wishes and feelings of individuals are central to the assessment, planning and decision-making processes. This creates an opportunity to implement a lifespan approach to



personalisation, improving outcomes for children and young people, individuals and families, whilst reducing duplication and bureaucracy for the professionals working with them.

7.3.3 Key to realising a person – centred approach in Worcestershire is;

- Participation, involvement and co-production with children, young people and their families in:
 - a. assessment and planning
 - b. service design, delivery and evaluation for special educational needs and disability
- Empowerment - choice and control passing to the individual (child and family, young person or adult) receiving support
- Developing and increasing the use of personal budgets

7.3.4 What are we going to do?

1. Further enhancement of the Your Life Your Choice website so that information is easy to find, informative and consistent
2. Enhance the skills of our workforce to enable more children and young people to access mainstream provision
3. Through our commissioning approach, increase user choice through the use of a personalisation approach and the use of direct payments and personalised budgets
4. Ensure that children, young people, parents and carers are engaged throughout and in relation to all strategy priority / work stream areas and truly feel that co-production is happening
5. Develop and implement a communications and engagement plan

7.4 Priority 2: Integration and Operational Delivery

7.4.1 We are committed to developing a local approach to integrated and multi-agency working and the coordination of services for children with SEND and their families. We will do this by working effectively with education, health and our care service providers, in order to improve the EHCP^{xvi} process to present a single, child centred plan and single support team experience.



7.4.2 What are we going to do?

- 1.** Jointly develop an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process (EHCP) that is understood by all and that all agencies are committed to
- 2.** Jointly develop an Annual Review^{xvii} (EHCP) process that is understood by all and that all agencies are committed to
- 3.** Implement a Quality Assurance Framework to ensure a consistently high standard of EHCPs are issued
- 4.** Ensure that children, young people, parents and carers are engaged and participate throughout and truly feel that co-production is happening
- 5.** Provide the appropriate support in schools in order that fewer children need Special School places
- 6.** Ensure sufficient places for children and young who require a special school/college placement
- 7.** Increase the number of children and young people who are able to access the most appropriate provision close to home
- 8.** Improve the timeliness of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process (EHCP) by ensuring that all services understand their statutory responsibility to children and young people with SEND
- 9.** Improve the educational outcomes, attainment and progress of children and young people with SEND and close the gap of attainment between those with SEND and their peers
- 10.** Reduce the disproportionately higher number of students with SEN who are excluded from school
- 11.** Reduce the absence rate for SEN students which are higher than for non-SEN pupils

7.5 Priority 3: Early Intervention

- 7.5.1** Supporting children to have the best start in life and ensuring that children and young people and their families can access help when they need it are also key priorities with the CYPP. The Healthy Child Programme (HCP) is delivered by universal services from pregnancy through to age 5 for all children. The HCP provides a schedule of screening, immunisations, health & development reviews



and advice and information. This enables the early and effective identification and assessment of children and young people with SEND.

7.5.2 We want children and parents/carers in Worcestershire to be able to access information and support in order that can be helpful at an early stage, as soon as problems or concerns arise. This may be in a child's early years or later in life.

7.5.3 We want families to experience co-ordinated services that offer information, help and support at the right time and in a way that minimises the need for statutory intervention in children's lives, encourages independence and improves children and young people's physical and emotional health and well-being.

7.5.4 Early intervention through identification of need across all aspects of a child's development and then provision of appropriate and timely information, advice, guidance and support for children, young people and families should help to achieve the ambitions we have for children and young people. That they achieve their full potential, are safe from harm, healthy and happy and, where possible, this is happening in their home community.

7.5.5 We want parents and carers to feel informed and supported in their role, whatever the needs of their child.

7.5.6 What are we going to do?

- 1.** Ensure that through our universal services, potential risk or SEN need are identified early
- 2.** Ensure that the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board Early Help offer is well understood by professionals and accessible to all families
- 3.** Implement a consistent 'Graduated Response' of early intervention to students with SEND in schools and early years settings
- 4.** Work as a whole system to improve the coordination of our services, to ensure that knowledge is shared and children, young people and their families/carers receive integrated support
- 5.** Increase (or increase access to) support for families who have children and young people with a learning difficulty, autism and those with challenging behaviour
- 6.** Re-commission community and family based short breaks

7.6 Priority 4: Preparation for Adulthood

7.6.1 We take a whole life approach, which starts at birth, and want to improve the personal transition experience and journey to adulthood for children and young people with SEND and their families.

- Starts at birth/diagnosis – whole life approach
- Person centred planning
- Transition arrangements

7.6.2 What are we going to do? Our high level aims are as follows:

1. Preparation for further/higher education and/or employment:
"I will be enabled, empowered or supported to take part in learning, training or employment opportunities."
2. Preparation for independent living:
"I will be able to live as independently as possible, having choice, control and freedom over my life, my home and my support, and have access to housing options that mean I can live safely and successfully on my own or with others."
3. Preparation for participating in society:
"I will be able to live within and be part of my local community."
4. Preparation for being as healthy as possible in adult life:
"I will be enabled, empowered or supported to enjoy the best possible health and emotional wellbeing."

7.6.3 We will achieve these aims by the following actions:

- Ensure that children with SEND and their families have access to the right information, guidance and support, at the right time in their lives, to support their journey through childhood and into adulthood
- Facilitate clear and effective access to quality services through the period of transition
- Use a co-production approach with families, ensuring that young people and their families are involved in strategic planning and service design and the development of future services



- Increase partnership working and collaboration between professionals in order to provide joined up, efficient and quality services
- Develop high quality data and management information to underpin effective strategic planning

7.7 Priority 5: Workforce Development

7.7.1 In order to embed the change required, WCC and its partners recognise the need to develop a workforce development programme that will result in a confident multi agency workforce that understand SEND, that is able to work together, shares a vision for those with SEND and achieves good outcomes.

7.7.2 What are we going to do?

1. Develop a joint workforce development programme that will work to embed a new culture of working together across universal, early help and statutory process
2. We will work with our partners – health, education and social care - to develop a co-ordinated programme of workforce development and activities across a 12 month period (rolling)
3. We will map the workforce needs for those working with SEND
4. We will develop a SEND learning culture that uses external partners for delivery of training – DFE^{xviii}, In-Control^{xix}, Council for disabled children^{xx}, other LA's
5. We will support the workforce to focus on building on strengths working with children, young people and parents rather than doing things to, doing for or in the worst case doing nothing

8. MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS

8.1 Governance

8.1.1 Implementation of the SEND reforms is overseen by the Children with SEND Improvement Board reporting to the Children and Young People's Sub Group of the Health and Well Being Board.



8.1.2 This partnership approach aims to improve the engagement of all agencies and ensure we work in a collaborative way to identify and meet the needs of children in Worcestershire.

8.1.3 Members of the Improvement Board are responsible for:

- Promoting joint working and a change of culture and attitudes to children, young people and their families with SEND
- Working effectively together to implement the SEND Code of Practice
- Contributing on behalf of their agencies to the SEND Self Evaluation
- Representing their agencies in defining and agreeing a joint plan for improving services for children with SEND and their families
- Allocating support from their agencies to lead on areas of work within the plan and contribute to work as required, in order to ensure the successful delivery of the multi-agency improvement plan
- Developing and driving forward the Priorities and Action Plan

8.2 Strategies & Policies Relating to SEND Strategy

8.2.1 The SEND Strategic Improvement Board links with other strategies for improving the lives of children and young people in Worcestershire and needs to maximise the influence and resource of other strategies and improvement agendas to ensure that we are working to a person-centred agenda.

8.2.2 Key related strategies include:

- [Joint Health and Well Being Board strategy](#)
- [Children and Young People's Plan](#)
- [Early Help Strategy](#)
- [Worcestershire's All Age Autism Strategy](#)
- [Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Strategy](#)
- [Prevention Strategy](#)
- SEND Accessibility Strategy (under review)
- [Worcestershire's Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health](#)
- Families in Partnership (FiP) Charter



9. DEFINITIONS / GLOSSARY

i Graduated Approach: A model of action and intervention in early education settings, schools and colleges to help children and young people who have special educational needs. The approach recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs and that, where necessary, increasing specialist expertise should be brought to bear on the difficulties that a child or young person may be experiencing.

ii Early Years Provider: A provider of early education places for children under five years of age. This can include state-funded and private nurseries as well as child minders.

iii Further Education (FE) College: A college offering continuing education to young people over the compulsory school age of 16. The FE sector in England includes general further education colleges, sixth form colleges, specialist colleges and adult education institutes.

iv Academy: A state-funded school in England that is directly funded by the Department for Education, through the Education Funding Agency. Academies are self-governing and independent of Local Authority control.

v Pupil Referral Unit (PRU): Any school established and maintained by a Local Authority under section 19 (2) of the Education Act 1996 which is specially organised to provide education for pupils who would otherwise not receive suitable education because of illness, exclusion or any other reason.

vi Independent School: A school that is not maintained by a Local Authority and is registered under section 464 of the Education Act 1996. Section 347 of the Act sets out the conditions under which an independent school may be approved by the Secretary of State as being suitable for the admission of children with EHC plans.

vii Early Years Provider: A provider of early education places for children under five years of age. This can include state-funded and private nurseries as well as child minders.

viii NHS England: NHS England is an independent body, at arm's length to the government and held to account through the NHS Mandate. Its main role is to improve health outcomes for people in England by providing national leadership for improving outcomes and driving up the quality of care; overseeing the operation of clinical commissioning groups; allocating resources to clinical commissioning groups, and commissioning primary care and specialist services.

ix Clinical Commissioning Groups: CCGs are clinically led groups that include all of the GP groups in their geographical area. The aim of this is to give GPs and other clinicians the power to influence commissioning decisions for their patients.

CCGs are overseen by [NHS England](#) (including its Regional Offices and Area Teams). These structures manage primary care commissioning, including holding the NHS Contracts for GP practices NHS.

x NHS Trust: NHS trusts are public sector bodies that provide community health, hospital, mental health and ambulance services on behalf of the NHS in England and Wales. Each trust is headed by a board consisting of executive and non-executive directors, and is chaired by a non-executive director.

xi NHS Foundation Trust: NHS foundation trusts are not-for-profit corporations that provide NHS hospital, mental health and ambulance services. NHS foundation trusts are not directed by the Government, but are accountable to their local communities through their members and governors, to their commissioners through contracts and to Parliament through their annual report and accounts. Foundation trusts are registered with and inspected by the Care Quality

xii Health and Wellbeing Board: A Health and Wellbeing Board acts as a forum where local commissioners across the NHS, social care and public health work together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population and reduce health inequalities. The boards are intended to increase democratic input into strategic decisions about health and wellbeing services, strengthen working relationships between health and social care and encourage integrated commissioning of health and social care services.

xiii Youth Offending Team (YOT): Youth offending teams are part of local authorities and are separate from the police and the justice system. They work with local agencies including the police, probation officers, health, children's services, schools and the local community, to run local crime prevention programmes, help young people at the police station if they're arrested, help young people and their families at court, supervise young people serving a community sentence and stay in touch with a young person if they're sentenced to custody.

xiv Early help: Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.

xv Local Offer: Local authorities in England are required to set out in their Local Offer information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. Local authorities must consult locally on what provision the Local Offer should contain.

xvi Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan): An EHC plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has SEN or a disability. It is drawn up by the Local Authority after an EHC needs assessment



of the child or young person has determined that an EHC plan is necessary, and after consultation with relevant partner agencies.

xvii Annual review: The review of an EHC plan which the Local Authority must make as a minimum every 12 months.

xviii Department for Education: DfE is a ministerial department responsible for children's services and education, including higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England. The department is also home to the Government Equalities Office. We work to provide children's services and education that ensure opportunity is equal for all, no matter what their background or family circumstances.

xix In-Control: In Control is a small not national charity working hard to help people to live the life they choose. For over ten years they have helped many thousands of people to gain choice and control in their lives through a self-directed support concept, which helps people to take charge of their care and support.

Their mission is to help create a society where people at risk of being excluded have the support they need to live a good life and where everyone is able to make a valued contribution.

xx Council for Disabled Children: The council for disabled children are the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector bringing together professionals, practitioners and policy-makers.

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WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SEND Peer Review

4TH – 7TH December 2017

Feedback Report

Peer review

The fundamental aim of the review is to help councils and their partners reflect on the provision in the local area for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It is important to remember that the review is not an inspection, it provides a critical friend approach to challenge the council and their partners in assessing their strengths and identifying areas that could be improved. The approach involved reviewing Worcestershire's self-evaluation; documentation and data and sample reviews of education, health and care plans. It also involved interviews with a range of children, parents/carers and staff from early years settings, schools, colleges, other providers, council and health commissioners and provider organisations. In addition, a number of visits to early year's settings and schools were carried out alongside a range of focus group sessions. It is important to recognise that the findings are based on this range of activity and Worcestershire is encouraged to reflect on what the findings mean in relation to the area as a whole.

The peer team

Peer reviews are delivered by experienced officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer review. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and their participation was agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer review at Worcestershire were:

- **Alan Clifton**, Lead Peer, Associate, LGA
- **Chris Jones**, SEND Strategic Development Lead, Nottinghamshire CC
- **Jayne Franklin**, Head teacher, The Children's Hospital at Great Ormond Street & University College Hospital.
- **Leila Francis**, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children, Mid Essex CCG
- **Sheelagh Sullivan** Head of SEN and Inclusion services, Peterborough City Council.
- **Venita Kanwar**, Review Manager, LGA

Scope and Focus

Worcestershire County Council requested an LGA peer review to assess the effectiveness and impact of implementing the SEND reforms.

The peer team evaluated the overall progress in the implementation of the SEND reforms against the following five themes:

- Leadership and governance of SEND across the local area
- Capacity and resources (including Finance)
- The identification of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Improving outcomes for children & young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

In addition, the council asked the review team to look at:

- Have the council got it right in terms of the challenges and strengths for children and young people with SEND?
- Are the priorities right, in this period of development?

In essence, the review will assess how it all works in practice and whether this improves outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

1 Executive Summary

There are 122,815 children and young people in Worcestershire aged 0-18 years. Of these, 5,859 primary school children and 4,614 secondary school children have special educational needs. 2911 have a statement of SEND or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in 2016/17 (aged 0-25 years) (Data Source: Office of National Statistics, June 17, School Census Jan 17).

The total number of children and young people with a statement or EHCP has increased from 2489 in 2014, to 2911 in 2016/2017 (an increase of 17%) (Data Source: ONE/ Capita).

There has been an increase in the numbers of children and young people with SEND who require specialist school provision and an increase in pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLC). For children and young people aged 4-19, speech, language and communication is the most common need/disability type followed by moderate learning disability. Multi-sensory impairment is the least common disability (Public Health Profile 2017).

There is a strong commitment in Worcestershire from both Elected Members and Senior Leaders to improving outcomes for children and young people who have SEND. Elected Members and Senior Leaders are self-aware and have a good understanding of the main issues. Collectively they are leading the direction of travel for the SEND agenda at pace.

There has been a significant change in the leadership of SEND at all levels in the County during the last five months which is providing considerable momentum to the changes in service delivery. There is an SEND strategy for the local area in place with agreed priorities. At the time of the SEND peer review it was possible to identify the immediate impact the relatively new SEND senior leadership team was having, however too early to measure any sustainable impact on outcomes. It is important to recognise that the pace of change requires increased levels of communication with staff who are delivering on the SEND agenda in Worcestershire and while there is a SEND strategy now in place, staff, do not yet know and understand the local area's vision and priorities. In addition, the lack of clarity about future SEND education and skills structure within the Council is having an impact on morale. Communication during this period of significant change requires further attention to enable the full engagement of staff and stakeholders.

Plans to address capacity issues in special schools in the short, medium and long term are currently being considered. The Council is aware that they need to further consult and implement a solution to meet the needs of children and young people with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) where the requirement for a specialist school has been identified.

The multi-agency SEND Strategic Board has been an important development for Worcestershire and provides both leadership and governance for SEND in the local area.

SEND staff are confident in their leaders and have been provided with opportunities for professional development and networking. This has improved joint working particularly with the Educational Psychologists and professional boundaries are now clearer.

The Council is also experiencing challenges with the recruitment of key staff and in particular SEND staff. This has resulted in considerable delays in the assessment of children and young people with SEND and their needs not being met early enough. The Council is aware of the issues and plans to address this problem in the short term but this is likely to be an ongoing challenge for the Council.

The Council's finance team are confident about meeting the short-term efficiencies identified for SEND activity but recognise that financial pressures remain. They would encourage the service to discuss future demand by providing real time data (i.e. in school placements) to facilitate the improved forecasting of need and to manage budgets more effectively.

There is further work to be done to re-focus the relationship with schools so that Worcestershire can begin to monitor support, challenge and intervene for the benefit of children and young people identified with SEND. The early signals from head teachers of Special Schools is very positive about the new approach to developing relationships between them and the Council. For example, the peer team saw a willingness from SEND Co-ordinators to work collaboratively in the co-production of key documents involved in the EHCP process. Head teachers articulated a desire to work with the Council to ensure that the provision for children and young people with SEND actually meets the appropriate need and demand. However, the Council will have to challenge schools further to support a more diverse range of children and young people and thereby facilitate a more inclusive approach in some schools. The Council recognises that this is an area for improvement.

When appropriate, the impact of learning services delivered by the Council, and those commissioned by the Council, should be reviewed. This should consider the learning outcomes for children and young people with SEND. We regularly heard schools commenting on the inconsistency of SEND training support. There are some areas within Babcock Prime, the commissioned school effectiveness and improvement service, that schools have a confidence in such as the Hearing Impairment Team. However schools would like to see a consistency of quality across all services delivered by Babcock Prime and it would be helpful for the SEND senior leadership team to have a stronger oversight of the quality of training that is available and delivered. It was also recognized that the Complex Communication Needs (CNN) team, commissioned/funded by the CCG's and provided by WH&CT was similarly respected.

There is a need to increase the parent/carers and children's voice across all aspects of SEND provision. Parents and carers are keen to be heard and are confident under the new leadership that things are changing and that their views are becoming known. Parents and carers should be engaged to co-produce services that take into account the aspirations of families and this should include the 'seldom heard' families. The engagement of these groups will raise the awareness of Council processes that are currently felt to be confusing by families. The recent stakeholder

reference group is a welcome development. There is also work to be done by the

Council to stimulate feedback from families that is thematic rather than individualised. The overall message was that families want to be more engaged.

The target to convert all remaining statements to EHCPs remains a challenge for the Council, however considerable resource has been provided and there is a confidence that the current pace will result in the March 2018 target being met.

The voice of the child/young person and parent/carer in the EHCP process was limited and not always personalised within the Plan. Within EHCP's the identification of educational needs and the provision was generally good but further work is required to bring health and social care elements to the same level. The commitment of case workers in developing the plans was evident and this was despite a heavy workload. The Council needs to develop a quality assurance framework for EHCP's and partners should also be engaged in this to ensure the consistency and a continuous improvement in the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The Council and its partners should consider giving a greater emphasis to attainment levels and progress based on prior attainment for pupils with SEN Support or an EHCP. This should also include including post 16 and 18 outcomes for children and young people. The data for the Early Years Foundation Stage is promising, but further work is required at Key Stages 2 and 4. We would suggest that the improvement of educational outcomes and attainment progress is given a greater prominence within the SEND Strategy. The increasing exclusion rate for pupils with SEN Support, though a national trend, also requires further attention.

2 Main Findings

2.1 Leadership and Governance of SEND Reforms

There is undoubtedly momentum and pace to deliver an improved SEND service in Worcestershire. A relatively new leadership team for SEND has reinvigorated activity and worked with strong political commitment to introduce and implement the first SEND strategy for the county and establish a SEND Strategic Board which includes a range of partners. The strategy provides clarity around the future planning of provision to address the changing needs of the cohort and identifies five clear priorities for action and delivery.

It was evident that the Senior Leadership Team and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills were self-aware and this is important given the challenges for SEND services in Worcestershire with reports of limited school capacity and considerably stretched resources. Head teachers, staff, stakeholders and partners commented several times that the focus on the SEND agenda had improved considerably since the recent arrival of three key staff: The Strategic Lead for Special Educational Needs and Group Manager for Children with Disabilities Services, the interim Assistant Director for Education and Skills and the Group Manager (SEND).

The leadership team has reduced the uncertainty of focus for SEND at the operational and stakeholder level, with the vast majority of people interviewed now believing that services will begin to improve and that they are being heard. Peers were confident that the present leadership capacity would facilitate change with pace but were less confident about the long-term and sustainable nature of the senior

team. The Director of Children's Services was aware of the fragility of the team at this early stage in the improvement journey.

The political lead for SEND is committed and understands the issues for the service. His priority is to ensure that a short, medium and long-term plan is developed to address the capacity issues in specialist school provision for the children and young people who require it.

Parents and carers have welcomed the establishment of a stakeholder reference group. This has now met twice and it is hoped that the parent/carer voice will strengthen and become more established in the future. However, there is further work to be done in moving this stakeholder group from a position that is personal and individual to a collective response that identifies needs for the majority of families accessing SEND services.

The vision for SEND needs to be owned by staff. There is more to be done to communicate the strategic direction and message of the vision to operational staff. The Council needs to consider the various ways in which you can share your message with others that are creative and inclusive and that could provide the service with quick wins. Staff and stakeholders want to work with you on this and are keen to be involved.

There is good work underway with schools. There is now an opportunity to re-align the way that the Council works in partnership with schools. Strong relationships between the Council and all schools, both those maintained and within multi-academy trusts, will potentially improve the identification of children and young people with SEND and the outcomes they then achieve. The Council recognises this and needs to work closely with schools to embed this approach. The peer team heard positive comments from head teachers at special schools about the changes in the last five months, saying "it was like working in a different local authority".

The operational partnership between the Council and Babcock Prime and the delivery of commissioning and outsourcing demonstrates some good work by staff. At a future date this may need to be reviewed to establish whether there is collective and shared oversight between partners and a clarity on the future direction for the delivery of SEND services and improved outcomes for children and young people.

Worcestershire's priorities for SEND are focused and you understand the direction you are taking. They are:

- A person-centred approach
- Integration and operational delivery
- Early intervention
- Preparation for adulthood
- Workforce development.

The peer team suggest you consider changing the final priority to read "leadership management, workforce development and capacity". The leadership demonstrated by the current SEND senior management team needs to be maintained and distributed through the workforce to build capacity. A priority around improving attainment, and progress from prior attainment for those identified with SEND, is also worthy of consideration.

2.2 Capacity and Resources including finance

Although financial pressures remain, the finance team are confident in the short term of meeting the financial challenges for SEND. Key areas of risk moving forward are identified as:

- Out of county placements
- Transport
- Post 16

Worcestershire's funding for SEND in 2017/18 is £78.9m. This includes High Needs DSG of £39.5m which is mainly allocated for provision and £4.3m of this forms part of the Babcock Prime contract. Worcestershire's Non-DSG budgets total £39.4m. This funding is split between Worcestershire County Council (£15.3m), Public Health Grant (£8.8m), Clinical Commissioning Groups (£14.9m) and a one-off SEND Reform Grant (£0.4m). The Council's contribution funds home to school transport, social care staffing and services, commissioned services, SEN staffing teams and an allocation to Babcock Prime for SEND services and in particular the Educational Psychology Service. The SEN Reform Grant has mainly funded staff to undertake the EHCP reviews, an online service for the local offer, training for staff and mediation support.

You now have processes and systems in place to identify children and young people with SEND and make commissioning decisions based on individual need. However, as highlighted by your own teams, there needs to be a review of school placements due to changes in demand. An Integrated Commissioning Officers Group work together to identify care needs and require timely information about individuals. The Placement and Resource Panel includes education and social care decisions to be made in one place. There are further plans to integrate health decision making for appropriate complex cases in order that decisions are made based on hearing health, social care and education needs in one place. This will result in more timely decisions and effective use of resources. Budgets are aligned with health, but are not pooled. There is a joint finance group which reports monthly and shares regular information and it is important that this group track the impact of growth in specialist placements on the high needs block.

Data is now being recorded accurately on the management system enabling an increased confidence in financial planning for current and future demand on SEND placements.

SEND Case Workers report that they are provided with training opportunities that enable them to develop better practice and improve their networks and relationships with key partner staff. For example, Educational Psychologists have been invited to team meetings to discuss their role and the interaction between practitioners has resulted in improved joint working, improved quality of EHCP's and an understanding of professional boundaries.

The Council has undertaken a review of High Needs commissioning during 2017 and this has resulted in a High Needs Commissioning Strategy for 2018-2022. Partners stated that they had been fully involved in the review. The Strategy is regarded as an important document to support future work across the partnership in meeting needs through joint assessments and by association joint commissioning.

The staff in the Vulnerable Learners Service are committed and focused on delivering improved outcomes for children and young people. Learning support for vulnerable learners is a real strength across the county both within schools themselves and through the services provided through Babcock Prime. The Vulnerable Learners Service generally agreed that the SEND Strategic Board was a positive step forward and that the culture of change that is being established is key to improved accountability. There was a clear message of aiming for outstanding and a golden thread of non-negotiables which is leading to a more coordinated approach. There was an ambition from the SEND Strategic Board to aim for outstanding provision.

There were good examples of bespoke training delivered by the Vulnerable Learner Service in schools, for example in meeting the needs of those with speech, language and communication challenges. There was also a recognition that schools now needed to identify and broker support and as a result there are some opportunities for cooperative work being missed. There was evidence of clear accountability and joint working in areas such as medical needs provision, the use of the Social, Emotional Mental Health audit and toolkit and very clear action planning for children missing education.

As a result of the severe pressure on providing specialist school places, the Council recognise the need to take a strategic position around place allocation.

Consideration could be given to the review of school admission guidance and associated decision-making processes to promote greater robustness and transparency. This will be essential if the Council is to facilitate some of the changes required. The Council may also wish to review the advice given to special school head teachers concerning their response to requests for placements from neighbouring local authorities when schools are beyond capacity numbers.

A number of head teachers feel that there are adhoc decisions being made regarding SEND provision and places and that as a result there are clear capacity issues in many schools, including a view that some children are not in the right setting to meet their needs. According to head teachers this has resulted in an imbalance in schools prepared to 'open their doors' in comparison to other neighbouring schools. Consultations and clarification around the SEND admissions criteria may help to alleviate some of this tension between schools.

Visits to primary schools revealed anxiety from governors and head teachers about capacity to provide increased levels of placements next year. The peer team were told that the increasing housing provision in Worcestershire alongside an increase of children and young people with SEND was not being strategically managed. Some special schools did not have the space to increase their footprint to accommodate more children and some schools were converting existing Information Technology rooms into classrooms to accommodate the increasing numbers of children.

Concerns were heard around the potential for increased health and safety implications if schools continue to utilise additional space for classrooms.

Co-production is one of your priorities within the person-centred approach, however the peer team would ask the Council to consider it being integral to all priorities. Opportunities for co-production need to be identified, including at an individual level in the writing of EHCP's and in future service developments. Co-production will require resourcing but the benefits in terms of improved trust and confidence of parents and carers will enhance the SEND offer.

The SEND Senior Leadership Team are aware of the SEND (education and skills) workforce issues which includes an over-reliance on agency staff, difficulties in recruitment and retention and the impact that this has on workloads and reducing the morale of a committed workforce. Work has started on a re-structure of the department which will also address some of these issues. The recent support from the Group Manager for SEND has been very much appreciated by case workers, however even more effective communication at this time of uncertainty is essential. The work to improve the staffing situation should be a short-term priority.

The Council do not have a Designated Medical Officer (DMO) / Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) and the appointment to this role is a priority. This is because the DMO/DCO should provide overall strategic direction for the local health service in meeting statutory requirements for SEND, identifying priorities for development and facilitating improvement in implementation as well as being a point of contact for schools, colleges and health providers. They should work closely with the paediatric multi-disciplinary team in supporting all activities necessary to ensure that the health provider services and CCG meet their responsibilities for children with SEND.

2.3 Identification of Children and Young People with SEN and/or Disabilities

Educational Psychology services are provided through the Council's partner, Babcock Prime. A shortage of Educational Psychologists (EP's) together with a growth in Education, Health and Care Needs assessments and the demands of the conversion programme has been challenging for Worcestershire. However, recent efforts to recruit to the EP service have been successful and have had a positive impact on the timeliness of reports to the statutory process. Work has also been undertaken to look at the content of EP advice and it is recommended that this work continues with a focus on person centred approaches and outcomes.

There is evidence arising from pre-school forums that there is good cross agency working in early years. A range of professionals come together across the county to discuss referrals to the pre-school forum including health, private and voluntary settings, special schools, SENDCos and the children's community nursing team. Multi agency relationships in the forum are very good, though they feel they are 'firefighting' at times because of the limited access to the right provision.

Worcestershire is fortunate to have a number of schools that appear to offer strong specialist training to support the identification of need. There is good expertise but it would benefit from being better coordinated so that all head teachers and SENDCos have a clear picture of who can offer support where, when and at what cost and where enquiries should be made.

2.4 Assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

Worcestershire are on track to carry out the conversions from Statements to EHCPs for March 2018. To enable this deadline to be met, resource has been moved within the service and the impact can be seen in the improved figures. In 2014/15 there were 1744, in 2015/6 there were 1136 and in 2016/17 a vast improvement to 471. This is impressive.

An audit of the EHCPs by the peer team identified the use of professional and therefore inaccessible language in the plans and in associated advice. It is always a challenge to provide advice in an accessible way but it is important that parents and carers understand what is being written. It is also important for professionals to understand what advice is being given and the multidisciplinary nature of the EHCP runs a risk that the unique professional language associated with individual professions may not be understood by all staff. Consideration should be given to a rolling programme of staff development with the aim of ensuring partners focus on a person-centred process, particularly the importance of working with families to agree outcomes. It may also be beneficial to establish regular multi-agency audits of the quality of EHCPs alongside methods for collecting regular parents/young people/children's feedback.

SENDCo networks should be reviewed to try to increase cohesiveness and provide opportunities for SENDCos to work with the Council to develop best inclusive practice in Worcestershire. Head teachers and SENDCos commented that they were unclear about the content and cost of traded packages. Head teachers lack of clarity also extended to expectations about what should be provided by schools from delegated funding. In general, there may be some disjointedness and confusion in what is offered by different services and providers.

There are clear examples of outstanding SENDCo practice throughout the county but some feel isolated and unable to share expertise in a more co-ordinated manner. There is also a varied understanding of SEND from head teachers across schools. Many SENDCo's suggested they would welcome a lead role from the Group Manager, SEND, as long as roles and responsibilities were clear. This would enable frustrations regarding issues such as finance and banding to be discussed in joint forums.

There is clear intent to improve the quality and timeliness of EHC needs assessments under the new leadership. As mentioned previously, increased resources, improved communications between staff and managers as well as training input has resulted in improvements within the SEND team performance. The ambition to create a single assessment through one plan is to be commended. This development would significantly improve the assessment experience for parents and carers and the process would speed up as a result. There are other local authorities who have gone down this route and it may benefit Worcestershire to seek them out to inform their way forward.

As previously mentioned, quality assurance (QA) of EHCPs requires further focus. It was unclear to the peer team, who took responsibility for QA of EHCPs - when was it done; what did the process involve; what were the key messages arising from QA; and what might be helpful in the future to enable you to sharpen your strategic focus for EHCPs.

There would be benefit in the co-production of guidance with health colleagues on the provision of advice in order to support identification and assessment. The DMO/DCO post could lead this development.

When requesting advice from health professionals, the Council should share the 'family story' obtained from their discussion and meeting with the child or young person and parents. This would enable health professionals to provide advice about

how the child or young person's health needs impact on their ability to make progress towards their identified outcomes and aspirations.

The process for requesting and delivering health advice needs to be clear and well understood. A request for health advice with agreed information should be sent to a clearly established contact point, which may be to a DCO, a CCG officer or specific email address. Where a number of relevant health professionals are identified there should be a process to coordinate their health advice. It should not be submitted as isolated individual professional reports.

Multi-agency meetings are a key opportunity to share views as part of the development of an EHCP. The Council, CCG and provider organisations should jointly develop criteria setting out when health professionals are required to attend face-to face meetings to discuss their advice, with clear expectations as to the purpose and benefits of this. It should be clear that where a child or young person has significant health needs or the health input is crucial to the development of an EHCP then health professionals will attend.

2.4 Improving outcomes for children and young people who have SEN and/or disabilities

The county has worked hard to achieve having 90% of schools rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted which is above the national average and the median for statistical neighbours. The judgements of OFSTED with regard to special schools are equally as impressive. There are good examples of outstanding inclusive practice in Worcestershire's schools. For example, small schools managing a real range of SEND needs in large classrooms using excellent Quality First Teaching strategies and working alongside parents and families to ensure adaptations are being made as early as possible. There were, however, concerns voiced by head teachers of special schools and some parents/carers that there was a reluctance by a number of schools judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' to admit students with additional needs fuelled by a concern about performance ratings being brought down.

Using information and technology more effectively would support improving outcomes. Worcestershire could consider investing in digital solutions that support parents, carers, children and young people to contribute directly to the assessment of their needs. A digital solution could also result in efficiency savings for the Council and an improved service user experience. The benefits could result in more meaningful outcomes and improved engagement and ownership of the processes resulting in a clearer understanding of needs to which better targeting of valuable resources could be made.

There is evidence of a cultural and process change in progress. This is due to the commendable drive and commitment of the Strategic Lead for Special Educational Needs and Group Manager for Children with Disabilities Services; Interim Assistant Director for Education and Skills; and Group Manager, SEND. They are focusing at all levels to improve SEND activity. The agreed vision and associated priorities that have been agreed at the Health and Wellbeing Board during the week of the peer challenge will drive the culture and process change required to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. It was noted at most focus groups and interviews, that senior leaders mentioned above were pivotal in facilitating the change process, and were respected for doing so.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) were clearly focused on children's outcomes and were working collaboratively with stakeholders and partners. For example, the work that had been developed with 'Our Way' an advocacy group, building relationships and gaining trust. It was evident that they were a valuable resource, working in a supportive and enabling way, intent on further developing their services so that they were relevant to children and young people, for example, working in schools to support children, and attending annual reviews to support parent and carers.

There was evidence from head teachers of relationships being built with key partners. Head teachers that we met with very much welcome the new SEND strategy and want to be part of the 'conversation'. They are keen to work with The Group Manager, SEND, and have been impressed with the speed at which the interim leadership arrangements have influenced change. Head teachers can see 'green shoots' of change but commented that they are still very recent. Head teachers are keen to help influence the change needed regarding planning places and the Review Team would suggest not losing the momentum following on from the peer review.

There was evidence of the impact of support that is provided for young people post 16. This included the dedicated housing officer linked to pathways and enabling independence for young adults. The early help and supportive aspect of this role is vital to the success of independent living for young people, preparing them during transition and are having an impact in preparing young people for adulthood. The careers enterprise company was also evidence of creative practice for post 16 learners. Increased partnership development with Further Education providers will be welcome.

EHCPs need to have a focus on the preparation for adulthood. There was evidence from interviews that there was good work in progress to prepare young people for adulthood but it needs to be identified in plans and their outcomes.

Ownership of SEND is required across all of Worcestershire's partners. You may wish to consider the opportunity to have a conference for head teachers and the Council's SEND team to launch the strategy to provide more clarity for next steps and a shared vision.

From a health perspective, the CCG should review its role in ensuring that there is sufficient oversight to provide assurance that the needs of children with SEND are being met in line with statutory requirements.

The improvement of educational outcomes, attainment and progress, is included within the Integration and Operational Delivery priority of the SEND Strategy. We would suggest that it is given a greater prominence within the SEND Strategy. There is an awareness in the Vulnerable Learners team that data suggests attainment outcomes are not as strong as they once were and that collaboration and communication between SEND services and School Improvement partners in Babcock Prime is essential so that the gap does not widen any further. We acknowledge that the Interim Assistant Director for Education and Skills understands that a review of the delivery of commissioning and outsourcing support for school attainment is required.

It may be helpful for the SEND team to further develop their children and young people 'dash board' to accurately monitor predicted performance for both progress, from prior attainment and actual attainment levels.

Developing a person-centred approach is a priority for Worcestershire and the peer team support this. This needs to be followed through and become more evident in all aspects of assessments. It was very difficult to identify the input of parents/carers or hear the voice of children and young people in EHCPs. Parents and carers felt that they needed to be better heard by the Council and they are keen to work with you. Working alongside stakeholders will improve all aspects of the service, including access to online and web activity.

We understand the difficulties in reaching the seldom heard groups. You have a lower than national average of BME groups in Worcestershire at 10.4% of all children living in the area compared with 25.5% nationally. The largest BME group of children and young people are of the White Other ethnic group, comprised of a large number of traveller groups that we did not hear from. To develop a truly person-centred approach requires resource and investment to hear those that are particularly hard to reach and to give them a voice. You know where your gaps are.

3. Review of EHC Plans

The peer team looked at only a small number of EHCPs (18 were provided) and the peer team interviewed some of the case officers involved in the writing of the plans. The quality was generally found to be consistent. The plans were compliant in the sense that they contained all of the required sections although personal budget details were underdeveloped. The quality of information and advice received to inform plans from wider agencies was generally poor and there was over reliance on reports from Educational Psychologists. There was little evidence that the principles of new ways of working had been embraced and the production of EHCPs appears largely to be a very administrative process. Consideration needs to be given to structural and cultural change within the service to ensure implementation of new expectations and clarity relating to roles.

The following specific observations were made:

- In section A of the plan (the voice of the child and the parent) the information was limited and not always personalised.

- In Section B (Identification of need), education need was generally of a good quality. The health needs section was generally limited in detail and sometimes included provision as well. Social care needs were not always recorded when relevant.
- The commitment of case workers writing the plans is excellent.
- Health sections require more detail and evidence of holistic assessment e.g. emotional wellbeing, psychological health and sexual health.
- The parent voice needs to be included alongside the views of the children and young people. There is currently ambiguity within the document as whether both the parental view or child view is articulated clearly.

4. Areas for consideration

From the peer team findings there are some key areas for Worcestershire County Council and the local area to consider going forward:

- Deliver on your SEND strategy, taking every opportunity to engage staff and stakeholders in the next steps.
- Re-focus your relationships with schools – how you monitor, support, challenge and intervene for the benefit of children and young people with SEND.
- Consult and implement on a solution to meet the needs of children and young people with EHCPs where the requirement for specialist provision has been identified.
- When appropriate, review the impact of learning services both within the Council and those it commissions, to benefit outcomes for children and young people.
- Increase the parent/carers, children and young people's voice across all aspects of SEND provision including co-production of services and taking into account the aspirations of children, young people and their parents and carers.

5. Next Steps

The Local Government Association would be happy to discuss how we could help you further through Helen Murray, the LGA's Principal Adviser, e-mail helen.murray@local.gov.uk Tel: 07884 312235 or Claire Burgess, Children's Improvement Adviser, e-mail Claire.burgess23@gmail.com Tel 07854407337

Thank-you to everyone involved for their participation. In particular, please pass on thanks from the review team to Alice Edmonson for help prior to the review and during the on-site phase.

6. Useful references

Developing support and services for children and young people with a learning disability, autism or both (NHS England, 2017 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/developing-support-services-children-young-people-with->

[learning-disability-1.pdf](#)) might be helpful in order to assess where health services are in relation to the nine principles (in particular principles 3, 6, 7 & 9) and to identify any developmental actions or work required with the council.

Securing good quality health advice for education, health and care (EHC) plans
(Council for Disabled Children, 2017)

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/Health%20Advice.pdf>)