

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6 DECEMBER 2023

UPDATE ON THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and the Director of All Age Disability have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on the progress being made against the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP).
2. The Panel are asked to review and comment on the Department for Education/National Health Service England (DfE/NHSE) feedback on the progress being made.

Background

3. Worcestershire SEND services were subject to a joint DfE/NHSE inspection in 2018. As a result of this inspection 12 areas for improvement were identified.
4. Worcestershire Children First SEND services are part of the All-Age Disability Services. The redesign of services saw SEND, Young Adults and Children with Disabilities brought together under one service and under one Director in Children's services. This re-design was agreed by Cabinet in February 2022.

Update on the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan

5. The November 2021 reinspection of SEND services identified that progress had been made in addressing eight of the significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection and four areas for improvement remained outstanding. An outcome of this revisit inspection was that the Local Area was required by the DfE and NHSE to produce an APP to demonstrate how the remaining areas of weaknesses would be addressed.
6. The APP sought to address the four remaining areas of weakness as follows:
 - The variation in the skills and commitment of some mainstream schools to provide effective support for children who have SEND.
 - The lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people.
 - Fragile relationships with parents and carers and a lack of meaningful engagement and co-production and collaboration.
 - The poor quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans) and limited contributions from health and social care,

along with the process to check and review the quality of EHC plans.

7. The APP is subject to review by DfE/NHSE. Reviews have taken place in September 2022 (*Outcome letter attached at Appendix 1*) and April 2023 (*Outcome letter attached at Appendix 2*). The last update report to this Panel took place May 2023 and focussed on the outcome of these reviews.
8. The most recent DfE/NHSE review of the APP took place in September 2023 . (The presentation to that review can be found in Appendix 3 and the associated Outcome letter at Appendix 4).
9. The outcome letter from the September 2023 review noted positively "*The evidence provided, alongside the feedback from partners, demonstrated the range of actions in place to continue and accelerate improvement.*"
10. The review also noted specifically in relation to workstream 1 that "*Both in your documentation and during this progress review, it is the view of the DfE and NHSE that you have now been able to demonstrate clear and sustained progress for Workstream 1: 'The variation in the skills and commitment of some mainstream schools to provide effective support for children with SEND'.*"
11. As a result of the above review findings this workstream has been removed from the formal APP and from formal external monitoring.
12. After each APP review, the plan is revised to reflect feedback, strengthen any areas required to improve progress and remove areas where progress has been achieved. Areas removed are taken into business-as-usual work.
13. The revised APP therefore now focuses on the three remaining workstreams. The workstreams are:
 - The lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people.
 - Improving the fragile relationships with parents and carers and a lack of meaningful engagement and co-production and collaboration.
 - Improving the quality of EHC plans and increasing contributions from health and social care. The initial visit noted that the processes to check and review the quality of EHC plans were also ineffective.
14. The recent revised draft APP, attached at Appendix 5, is the plan on a page which reflects membership of the work streams, aims, objectives and outcomes measures. The next external DfE /NHSE review will take place in April 2024.
15. Worcestershire are due for their full SEND inspection, and it is expected to take place at any point between now and Spring 2024.

Purpose of the Meeting

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

- Consider and comment on the information provided in respect of the outcome of the latest review of the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan
- determine what further information or scrutiny is required; and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - Outcome letter of 6-month APP Review

Appendix 2 - Outcome letter of the 12-month APP Review

Appendix 3 - Presentation submission for the 18-month Review

Appendix 4 - Outcome letter of the 18-month APP Review

Appendix 5 - Draft APP Revised version September 2023

Contact Points

Mel Barnett, Director for All Age Disability

Tel: 01905 643969

Email: mbarnett1@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Alyson Grice/Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officers Tel: 01905 844962/846607

Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

Agendas and Minutes of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 8 August 2018, 6 March 2019, 13 November 2019, 16 June 2020, 23 February 2022, 3 November 2022, 23 May 2023.

[Agendas and Minutes for Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel are available on the Council's website here](#)

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