

## SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme

### Update from Meeting with WBC & Parents 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021

**Presenting:** Carol Cammiss (Director Children's Services),  
Sal Thirlway (WBC Assistant Director Education)  
Dan Robinson (WBC SEND Operational Lead)  
Matthew Booth (WBC SEND Innovation & Improvement Programme Lead)

**Terri Walsh** welcomed and introduced the presenters.

**Carol Cammiss** gave an overview of the SEND Ofsted/CQC Revisit on 11-13<sup>th</sup> May. Inspectors from Ofsted and the CQC reviewed the 6 significant areas of weakness highlighted in the previous full inspection in March 2019. The purpose of the revisit was to assess how the actions from the joint area inspection has progressed. Only the highlighted areas of weakness were inspected as to whether sufficient progress has been made against those areas. If sufficient progress has been made, the Written Statement of Action ends, the results are still embargoed until later this week (expected that the results will be available 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021). WBC believes that the results are fair and reflects families' views and work carried out by the local area. Although, the WSoA timeframe is coming to an end, this is not the end of the process and all work will carry on into the SEND IIP (SEND Innovation and Implementation Programme), along with expanded areas of work identified for SEND.

The main purpose of this evening presentations is to provide updated on SEND IIP and progress since SVW AGM in March 2021, as agreed at the AGM.

### **Matthew Booth – Improvement Programme Lead, SEND IIP Update**

Set out an overview of the SEND IIP delivery, what work is/has been going on, along with sharing some of the issues over the complexity of the work and what the next steps are.

Following the revisit inspection, the areas of work are transition from the SEND Implementation Board which governed the actions of the WSoA, into the SEND IIP to cover more areas of work to improve SEND across the borough. Though the inspection highlighted some progress, there are still areas/tasks that need to be completed scope as well needing to be expanded.

There are now four areas of focus under the SEND IIP.

- 1. Strengthening Local Provision and Quality of Practice** – high quality services. Struggles with local provision, and consistent good quality practice.
- 2. Efficient and Effective Processes** – EHCP's and annual reviews. Strengthen processes.
- 3. Transitions** – WSoA focus was to transition to adulthood, this has now been expanded to cover other transitions, early years, primary to secondary etc. This is a large piece of work where the transition process has not previously been reviewed.

**4. Impact, Intelligence and Sufficiency** – performance management, how services are performing and impact on families and what SEND services are needed locally to meet needs

Along with a **Coproduction group**, which is overseeing all areas of working, to ensure that work is coproduced where appropriate to do so. The group will provide advice and support in how to effectively coproduced. The group will monitor how coproduction impacts and is embedded within the other areas.

### Highlights / Updates on the areas of work

#### Area 1 – Strengthening Local Provision and Quality of Practice

- Work is continuing the Ordinarily Available (OA) / Right Time Right Place project – Increasing SEN Support in mainstream schools primarily.
- Local Offer – making information more readily available and easier to access and navigate.
- Training and development for professionals including online. More multi-disciplinary training to aid the joined up working across the borough.

#### Area 2 – Efficient and Effective Processes

- Planning the process for the roll out for OA, across the borough and all partners.
- Strengthening the annual review (AR) process. Providing training and greater understanding of the process for school, in particular mainstream, where a handful of AR are undertaken each year.
- Creating quality EHCP's and robust processes.
- Increasing information sharing to enable to the process to improve. Along with incorporating feedback and reviewing highlighted areas of weakness in the process.

#### Area 3 - Transitions

- A large number of individuals are involved in this group due to the expanded scope. The group has been broken down into the key area of transitions eg Early years, and 14 years + transition to adulthood.
- There are still gaps outstanding particularly with the Transition to Adulthood work and the group will continue to focus on those and close those gaps.
- Language across all areas required clarifying as, terminology varied in the different sectors / relevant parties. Building relationships across the transition points and how they can work together/share data to create better services/transitions

#### Area 4 – Impact, Intelligence and Sufficiency

- Ensuring there are owners allocated to the work, around commissions the local provision and ensuring the right local provision is in place. Increased targeted provision. There are budget pressures, particularly post covid with finances are unclear at a national level.
- Performance management, ensuring what is happening on the ground is measured and fed back into the system and drive improvements moving forward.

**Coproduction** – supports all the groups. There is a real aim to embed a coproduction culture which is challenging with so much work being undertaken. Coproduction is different for different areas of work, which is where this group can support and advise. The group will monitor the coproduction in

the areas and identify the areas of weakness and how to support an embedded process of coproduction.

The coproduction meetings will have themes, where constructive challenge and support will be provided to all areas of the SEND IIP.

**A few risks** have been identified– capacity of staff and finances, covid has been disruptive and delayed many areas of work due to staff being deployed elsewhere and sickness, partners also have had a disrupted work force which has also impacted on the pace of change. Links across the whole of SEND in the borough with all the relevant partners are still being developed and strengthened. The forward planning and analysing of areas of improvement takes time and does not provide quick fixes. It is important that the time is taken to ensure the requirements are correct. Resource pressures are a risk to delivering improvements. Communications requires focused attention to support information sharing with families and all partners.

### **Questions from Parent/Carers:**

**Question – this seems to be a very ambitious plan, but how will people on the ground see small concrete steps. (Excited going to have an AR). Worried too much and things will get lost.**

**Answer from Matthew** – it is big and ambitious, within the detail there is lots of detailed small steps of work, where on a weekly basis there are steppingstone meetings to coach people through the process. We also rely on meetings like this one to help keep our ear to the ground as well as the challenge that SVW provide.

**Question – SEND training in mainstream primary – I found a lot of the schools are not very willing to take on the SEND training. Reality it is hard for schools to do.**

**Answer from Dan** – originally my focus was document generation for support the work, which was coproduced well, and the feedback was positive. Now we are into the delivery of the OA (Ordinarily Available) to schools, there is still a lot of positivity. SEN Team have asked for case studies on how SEN Support and EHCP are being supported in mainstream placements. So far how this support has provided has not been clear and the SEN Team are asking for clarity of the work that is being undertaken by schools. The work is developing, as issues and areas of concern have arisen. We are two months into the process, where the recognition of what support is in place for SEN Support and building that support in. There is also training support for some SENCo's, some SENCo's also have heavy workloads with a 75% teaching timetable, and there is a varying skill set and experience level amongst the SENCo's in the borough.

**Question – there is lots on strategy, I am disappointed not to see what is going to be delivered. I'd like to see, the details of what is actually going to benefit families. How is this going to achieve anything and different to ones we have seen before?**

**Answer from Matthew** – we have committed to come back quarterly to report to families, so that they can provide that challenge to the tasks and how it is being felt on the ground by families. Next time we could provide a list of what is considered to have been improved and obtain the family

feedback on those. Likewise, our prioritise may not be the same as those of families and some steps are not felt by families.

**Answer from Carol** – the framework is required, to obtain the ‘buy in’ from a Senior and Council Executive level, to provide the support for the families. Today was about showing the framework and the next step will be the details on the ground which runs across the SEND agenda and the WBC delivery.

**Action for SVW – detail questions for the next event in September 2021.**

**Question - What do we do when assessments are not carried out and requests are ignored?**

**Answer from Dan** – It is currently 30 a month for an (ASD) assessment. We now have control over our timelines for EHCP assessments and there is a requirement for increased support from health for assessments such as OT. With AR we are aware of the issues, our statutory responsibility is to ensure that schools carry out that AR, there is now a process in the SEN Team to ensure that these are now being carried effectively. Some of the data has showed that schools like Addington carry out AR very effectively, those particularly in mainstream where a handful are done, need more training and support to carry out those meetings effectively, regardless of whether SEN Team members attend those meetings. The information obtained from the AR’s enables the commission of the gaps. Which is a large piece of operational work, this will take time for this work to impact families. Training sessions are going to run for AR’s.

**Question – once you leave mainstream, AR’s are meant to set the destination for the child. There is a lack of understanding when things go wrong, the impact that has on the child. I still get a lot of mis information on how things work and grey areas, more clarity is required for families.**

**Answer from Dan** – the OA, is challenging areas about how inclusive some provisions are with SEND. We are championing those who are inclusive and challenging others to achieve the same. The paper exercise/trail is the SEN officers’ job to follow that and ensure that it is a robust process.

**Question – post 16 is down to parents?**

**Dan – agreed, there is a large weight on parents to get things done. The service is being structured now to try and make sure it is more robust. In order be able to challenge other areas, first our paperwork/processes must be robust.**

**Answer from Carol** – once robust systems are in place, it does allow for conversations to then be held. Lots of the conversations are frustrating across the local area. Currently we are trying to ‘right side’ things which were not given forethought back in 2015 when the SEND Reform changes were brought in. We have been retro fitting with provision, expansion of Addition and the new ASD school. We are attempting to move a failing service, through the pandemic, move our schools, and provide full local provision. There are lots of challenging conversations going on, without any statutory authority, particular with non-LA maintained schools, where our authority is very limited now. We are trying to improve immediately as well as long term and provide a sustainable model for the future. It must change, sadly not the magic answer for your children right now, I can only apologise that the measures were wrong and we are trying to fix things, but we do hear and understand the frustration. We want to hear about the gaps and ensure that we know all the issues. What might seem simple to families to fix, is often much harder for the LA to do.

**Question – there are some quick fixes, communication and transparency, be clear what the process are around AR, explain to families what to expect, eg AR no decision notice from panel which prevent disagreement of the plan, didn't receive the plan, case work left, and now another with no communication, never received a final draft since Jan and now having an early review in a weeks' time, as the plan doesn't reflect the review, mainstream child, but haven't been listened to as a family. The AR was not carried out in a timely way. Feel that sticking plasters have been used at every stage, such a shame for our children's education. Agree school needs training and SEN Team, need training on communication.**

**Answer from Carol –** sorry about the issues you have, Dan is working on all these areas.

**Answer from Dan –** there have been issues with the SEN Team, lack of communication, however lots have left, and we have now had a stable workforce for the last 4 months of consistent officers. This team are now with us until December, which will be a year of consistent staff. There is a plan for SEN team structure going forward, which is currently going through the approval process, with permanent staff, this along with the solid processes which are being embedded will ensure what expectations are of the team and any new officers and they will have clear communication processes to follow to prevent issues moving forward.

**Question – We are not asking for same case worker, just to be informed that they have been changed.**

**Answer from Carol –** absolutely, this is part of the work Dan is doing, lots that goes wrong don't always make it to me, but we are dedicated to future proof improvements we are making. Lots of things have been discovered that have not been right and it is taking time to correct all the issues (internally) and we are trying are best to fix as quickly as possible.

**Question – re consultations, I was advised by David Green, respite, we are crying out for SEMH respite, particularly for those who are not disabled enough for specialist but too 'naughty' for mainstream. When are we going to get support, so many of us are in crisis? Needs are identified but there is no support, regardless of funds. How are we meant to wait 12-24 months for this to be provided? Sorry I get so stressed and upset as this has been on going for 4 years, there is still no improvement for our children. We are seriously struggling, and our mental health is suffering, our children going to end up in care or we are going to be sectioned.**

**Answer from Carol –** aware of the SEMH support, respite/foster carers, is part of the sufficient project. I appreciate your level of frustration; we know this is a gap. Getting it off the ground is difficult from the LA point of view and must provide evidence of the need and we can't source anything out of borough either as it is so niche. I did raise this as a higher priority following comments at the SVW AGM.

**SVW comment from Terri – two sessions next with Richard Tipping to talk about the SEND sufficient, if you can't attend there is also a survey you can complete. Information will be sent out to you all again, so that you can be a part of the project.**

**Answer from Carol –** I am also going to raise again with Richard, demonstrating the need.

**Answer from Dan –** school SEMH, now schools are dealing with a lot more SEMH, the skills to deal with SEMH are often the biggest issues. We must look at the skills required to support SEMH.

**Question – why can't Bridges be used for more than physical disabilities. Why can't staff offer the service on the need of the family rather than specific conditions.**

**Answer from Carol** – I have asked this question myself, as a respite home, it has to be registered with Ofsted and with a specific statement of purpose which controls how it can be used. Unfortunately, it narrows the areas by which it can be used. There also has been a limited service provided through covid.

**Question – can the remit be changed. It's so important to support these families to keep these families together.**

**Answer from Carol** – Ofsted, will not allow that, until the categories are changed, this process which we started to review but covid prevented this happening. We are now looking at this again, but it is not a simple process and will take time, if it is possible to do.

### **Additional Chat Questions which we weren't answered at the meeting, due to time:**

Q: Are parents/carers going to a part of these groups (SEND IIP)?

A: from SVW, yes SEND Voices Wokingham are part of all SEND working groups along with voluntary sector reps. There are also several focus groups being run by SVW for all families to get involved and be part of the process.

Q: are there enough professionals available to assess children for their EHCP's and Transition reviews?

Q: Annual Reviews are supposed to have a clear destination for the child for the next year and all the professionals need to understand this aim and yes it can be an outcome in the annual review/EHCP.

Q: What is being done about supporting the SENCo's that need extra training, and regulating their capability.

Q: could case studies be presented to us (families) in each strand of improvement.

Q: Focus on spending money locally makes it extremely important that local provision provides quality and choice locally. That means commissioning and quality assurance is really important. 1 provision to meet the need for overnight respite for 18-25's example is not ok.

Q: I'm an EY teacher and SENCo (as well as a parent). The BIGGEST issue for me remains early identification and support. There is a whole group of children who have high needs, but not high enough for EHCP and funding who we can identify in the EY bit can't get support for. There is no

funding and no support. I can't even get them seen by SALT quickly, so we end up passing issues onto primaries. And then it takes the primaries a long time to support those children. Give us the support and the funding and the access to early help and early intervention for these children.

A: (I understand Dan is going to contact parent directly outside of the meeting, though still a valid question to answer for all the families to see)

Q: Why is so much expected of parents and we don't get paid to do it nor can we walk away from it at 5.30pm!! We love our children and want the best for them and sometimes I feel that is taken advantage of.

Q: some parents in crisis just do not have the capacity to take this on, not all parents have the right knowledge of how everything works and even if they do, can be so consumed by how hard things are at home that they just cannot take on this mammoth task.

Q : Why is the onus on the parents for EOTAS within WBC? Its not EHE

Q: Communication is a huge issue across the whole of WBC SEND services. Even between themselves never mind parents!

Q: What about enforcement of ECHP's?

Q: I'm looking at secondary schools at the moment - lots of them put links to local offer on their website and little else. There is a shortage of resource schools and granularity of resource being offered - what are the plans with schools please?