

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Date 14/06/2021

REPORT TITLE:	SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITY SERVICE UPDATE
REPORT OF:	JAMES BACKHOUSE – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

The report provides members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an update on the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services that support young people in education.

This update links to the SEND Improvement Plan which underpins the SEND Strategy 2020-2024, agreed by the Committee in December 2020.

The current breakdown of children with SEND on Wirral:

- 18.5% pupils with SEND, this is an increase from 17.9% at Q3 in 2020/2021.
- The number of Early Years children with SEND is 7.5%, this is an increase from 6.0% in Q3 in 2020/2021.

The current breakdown of children with an EHCP on Wirral:

- Compared to the national average of 2.1%, Wirral's total 0-25 population with an EHCP remains unchanged at 3.3% at the end of 2020/2021.
- In relation to Children Looked After, the number of children with an EHCP is 8.7% which is an increase from 7.6% in Q3 2020/2021.
- In relation to young people under Child Protection, the number with an EHCP is 5.9% which is an increase from 4.2% in Q3 2020/2021

In relation to referrals for EHCP's and completion within the statutory 20-week timeline:

- In comparing the first 4 months to previous years for EHCP assessments, in 2021, 256 EHCP assessments have been requested, compared with 278 in 2020 and 189 in 2019.
- The percentage issued on Wirral within the statutory 20 week timeline continues to drop from 91% in Q2, 25% in Q3 and now 21% in Q4 2021, compared to the most recent figure of 60.1% nationally.

In relation to the statutory services that support the EHCP process:

- Speech and Language Therapy EHCP Advice response compliance for February to April was 99.0%, with only one late response.
- Educational Psychological Advice submitted within 6-week statutory timescale for the Spring Term 2021 is at 33%. When this figure is adjusted in line with local practice, to account for exceptional circumstances, the percentage rises to 35%.
- When comparing Educational Psychological Advice to previous years for the Spring Term, in 2020 the percentage within the 6-week timeline was 52% and in 2019 the percentage was 56%.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. Note of the current position of the SEND Service and performance outcomes for the Directorate in relation to SEND.
2. Agree to receive a further update in three months on progress towards completing EHCP assessments within the statutory timeframe.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Children, Young People and Education Committee has a role to play in ensuring that the local authority and partners are working collectively to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The SEND service update provides an opportunity for Committee to understand the actions being taken to address the current performance outcomes and seeks endorsement for the actions being taken.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 The SEND service update articulates the processes that have been put in place to provide direction and accountability for improvement.
- 3.2 Benchmarking comparisons of other local authorities have taken place in relations to the number of officers employed in relation to workload.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At its meeting of the 28th January, the Children, Young People and Education Committee endorsed the progress made in relation to the SEND improvement plan.

This SEND service update articulates the current performance in relation to the SEND improvement plan.

- 3.2 The SEND improvement plan is aligned to the SEND Strategic Plan. At its meeting of the 1st December, the Children, Young People and Education Committee agreed the SEND Strategy 2020-2024. The Strategy sets out the local area's priorities over the next four years for improving services, support and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The Strategy is aligned to Wirral's aim to secure brighter futures for young people and families and deliver services which help people live happy, healthy, independent lives.
- 3.3 In response to the current challenges faced in relation to compliance and completion of EHCP assessments the following actions are taking place:
- A review of the SEND assessment team has taken place. Current vacancies will be filled with permanent staff to address the challenge of capacity in completing EHCP assessments within the statutory 20-week timeframe.
 - A review of provision for young people requiring Special School places for September 2021 has taken place, additional capacity has been agreed, to sustain the additional demand the LA is currently facing.
 - A review of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is currently underway, this will have a focus on evaluating the spend of the High Needs Block. A DSG management plan will be produced, allowing for a longer-term approach for SEND provision on Wirral. This will be in-line with the SEND Strategy agreed by members in December 2020.
 - In relation to the challenges faced by the Educational Psychology (EP) service to deliver assessments within the relevant time frame, the service has struggled to recruit to vacant positions within the team. Previous recruitment processes have taken place with no success and a short-term solution to address the current capacity challenge is being implemented.
 - Concerns in relation to EP recruitment have been shared with the DFE, who have confirmed this is a national challenge.
 - A further recruitment process to address EP vacancies will take place during the summer term.

Monitoring and review processes in place to address the challenges in relation to compliance and completion of EHCP assessments:

- SEND operational group meet monthly to review progress against key performance measures.
- Monthly data reports to identify changes in relation to key performance indicators.
- Weekly meeting between key LA officers to address completion of EHCP assessments within statutory timeframes.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications arising out of the report. However, if the outcomes of the SEND service do not achieve expected standards within an appropriate time frame, this may result in there being financial implications for the Council and/or wider financial implications in relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant. Members of the committee will be

informed of any financial implications at the next update in relation to the SEND improvement plan.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The report recognises and responds to the requirements set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 and the statutory responsibilities on local authorities regarding how services and support are delivered for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities.
- 5.2 We are likely to face legal challenges if we do not meet our statutory duty.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications arising out of the report. Delivery of the action plan is carried out using existing resources. The Committee will be informed should there be any resource implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The local authority and partners are committed to driving improvements across the local area to support improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Failure to do so will mean that children and young people may not be provided with the right support and intervention to enable them to achieve their aspirations both now and in the longer-term.
- 7.2 The local authority and partners are inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in relation to how the local area effectively identifies, meets the need, and improves outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Improvement which is aligned to statutory requirements and responds to the needs of the local area, is essential to demonstrate to regulators that Wirral has effectively delivered on the SEND Reforms as set out in 2014 Children and Families Act.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation in relation to the performance of the SEND has taken place with Primary, Secondary and Special School Headteacher groups during the summer term. They have outlined their view of the current situation in relation to SEND and are keen to support improvement in this area.
- 8.2 Discussion with parents and young people in relation to SEND have taken place to capture their experiences on Wirral.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

(c) No because the quality impact assessment has already been completed for the SEND Strategy and can be found here: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and->

[neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments](https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments) The EIA has been reviewed since its completion six months ago and remains valid.

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2.

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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[SEND Strategy 2020-2024](#)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People and Education Committee	28 th January 2021
Children, Young People and Education Committee	1 st December 2020
Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee	28 th January 2020