



Cheshire East Overview of progress against our SEND WSOA

Area A - The process and quality of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans

August 2020



1. The issues identified within this weakness

The following significant weaknesses were identified in our previous SEND Local Area Inspection in March 2018:

- The process of requesting an EHC plan is not universally well understood. There is the widespread perception that only educational professionals can request an assessment for an EHC plan. Most parents reported that the responsibility to gather evidence was left to them. Other professionals agreed with this. The process is not clear for parents or some professionals and the parents feel 'abandoned' in the process.
- The quality of EHC plans are inadequate. The plans are, at best, statements of educational need. Despite other professionals making good contributions to the plans, this information does not always translate into meaningful outcomes. Inspectors saw far too many examples of children who have significant health and/or social care needs yet their EHC plans state 'none identified'. This failing on the part of leaders has a detrimental effect on the lives of children, young people and their families.

2. Summary

In the first 12 months of implementing our Written Statement of Action (WSOA), emphasis was given to reviewing all processes and documents through external support; this allowed for a focus on addressing timeliness of EHC needs assessments (see themed report on EHC timeliness for further information). To ensure that EHC Plans were improving in quality, a set of non-negotiables were put in place, which outline our basic expectations for quality EHC Plans. There were challenges in introducing these due to a high volume of agency staff and consequential staff turnover. The real drive for quality started in Autumn 2019 with our Quality Assurance Framework for SEND being reviewed in October 2019. The revised Framework that is now in place was co-produced and sets out what good looks like in Cheshire East and our aspirations, with a clear action plan which will be developed further and driven through the SEND Quality Assurance working group to ensure progress is made at pace and is sustained.

3. The impact of our changes

- ✓ Requests for EHC needs assessments are **now regularly received from parent carers (21%** of requests over the past 12 months) and professionals (1% of requests over the past 12 months), in addition to requests from schools and settings (78% of requests over the past 12 months). At the time of our WSOA (May 2018), 91% of requests were from schools and settings, and only 9% of requests were from parent carers.
- ✓ In a parent carer survey carried out in January 2020:
 - **57%** of parent carers that took part said they **felt involved in making decisions** about the EHC Plan and about how best to support their child/young person.

- When asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were that **their views and those of their child/young person were taken into account** during the last review of their EHC Plan, **67%** of parent carer participants said they were very or fairly satisfied.
- **56%** of parents were very or fairly satisfied that their child/young person's EHC Plan **accurately describes their needs** and how their needs should be met. For more recent plans (where the EHC plan was finalised in 2019) this increased to **67%**.
- ✓ In February 2020, a telephone survey was carried out with a sample of parent carers whose child had recently had a new EHC Plan finalised:
 - over half of respondents (**65%**) **were satisfied** with the EHC needs assessment process overall.
 - **88%** agreed that the EHC Plan included **all the relevant information**, including strengths and needs
 - **88%** agreed that the EHC Plan was **easy to understand**
 - **82%** agreed that they could **see themselves and the child in the EHC Plan**
 - **76%** agreed that **we explained the needs assessment process clearly**
 - **76%** agreed that the **process was child centred**
 - **71%** agreed that their **views and opinions** were considered
- ✓ In the last health professionals survey (October 2019), one health professional commented: 'Parents can make an application themselves and the information needed is on the Local Offer'. Another said 'the DCO has taken the time to meet with other professionals to explain the process of EHCP'.
- ✓ In a survey carried out with young people in June 2019, **73%** of young people had a **good awareness** of what an EHC plan is.
- ✓ The last meeting of the multi-agency Quality Audit group in July 2020 rated **75%** of the reviewed EHC Plans as '**good with elements of outstanding**'.
- ✓ Our 'TOGETHER' co-production definition and principles are used beyond the Council's SEND Team and have been embedded across children and adult services, and across partner agencies within the Cheshire East Children's Trust.

Whilst we recognise that there is more work to do to further increase satisfaction rates, progress since the 2018 SEND Local Area Inspection is demonstrable when the January 2020 online parent carer survey results are compared with the results from the 2018 inspection webinar - where only 20% of parent carers felt that their child's needs had been identified, only 12% felt their child's needs were being met and only 34% of parent carers felt involved in the assessment.

4. The key changes we have made

4.1. Quality Assurance Framework

An initial Quality Assurance (QA) Framework for SEND was developed and in place by December 2018. However, on reflection, the initial framework was not as aspirational as we would have liked and did not set out the SEND Partnership's ambitions. Therefore, a fundamental review of this document took place in October 2019. A multi-agency workshop focusing on 'Defining Excellence across SEND' took place with a wide range of representatives from across education, health and care services, along with parent carers, to co-produce our refreshed Quality Assurance (QA) Framework for SEND by considering what 'good' looks like in Cheshire East. This was then supported by input from our SEND Youth Forum and, following consultation and final feedback, our refreshed Framework was finalised in February 2020.

Multi-agency Quality Assurance Task and Finish Groups have been used since 2018 to drive forward improvements relating to the quality of EHC needs assessments and EHC Plans, such as developing our standards for EHC Plans, initiating our Quality Assurance Framework for SEND and refreshing advice templates. The current Quality Assurance Task and Finish group is overseeing the implementation of our refreshed Quality Assurance Framework for SEND and accompanying action plan. Additional capacity has been put in place to ensure this gains momentum and pace. This includes leadership through a seconded post from Health and management from a seconded school improvement Project Manager, both of which are supported by SENCOs within the Inclusion Quality Team.

Proposals for the longer-term quality assurance function will be consulted on in the Autumn term, based on our experience over the last 6 months, in order to ensure that we have a sustainable structure which makes impact.

4.2. Co-production

We worked with young people, parent carers and professionals to co-produce a shared definition of co-production in Cheshire East called 'TOGETHER', along with a suite of materials to explain our 'TOGETHER' concept, including a video produced by our young people (the video and all supporting information is available online at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/together). This work has been endorsed by, and is being adopted by, key partnerships and agencies across children and adult services in Cheshire East in addition to the SEND Partnership.

We have introduced 2 co-production points within our EHC needs assessment process. Following a recommendation from the Parent Carer Forum in October 2019, these are now called 'Working TOGETHER' meetings. In order to ensure that we could address backlogs relating to timeliness, full implementation of these meetings was paused. We started to implement the meetings again from September 2019; however, learning has resulted in these being more flexible and they may take

place by telephone (though face to face meetings may still be preferable where children and young people have more complex needs).

Further work is currently taking place to embed working TOGETHER and co-production as a continual way of working with parent carers throughout the EHC needs assessment process, in order to change mindsets and move away from a prior focus on co-production taking place only in 2 designated meetings. The aim of this work is to further enhance communication throughout the process, and involve, talk and listen to parent carers at all times. This work is currently being undertaken by SENCOs within our Inclusion Quality Team, in conjunction with our Information and Advice Service and SEND Locality Managers.

4.3. Staffing and culture

There has been a complete change in leadership for SEND within the Council since our WSoA was signed off in 2018; this includes a change in Director, 2 New Heads of Service, 3 New Locality leads, and a high proportion of SEND key workers. In addition, the Educational Psychology service has moved to an experienced Head of Service who is rapidly securing changes in working practice in the service through motivational leadership. This has led to a change in culture and commitment which will enable greater pace in improvements and ensure sustainability of changes. It has taken longer than we would have liked to achieve this position due to the need to follow appropriate HR processes.

To further enhance specialist SEND support and knowledge within our Early Start Team, 2 seconded part-time Health Visitors (one for the Eastern Cheshire area and one for the South Cheshire area) have been put in place to act as specialists for Health Visitors around SEND.

4.4. Processes

Revised request information - We have published revised, co-produced information about how to request an EHC needs assessment, which includes clear, targeted information for educational settings, young people, parent carers, and for other individuals wishing to bring a child or young person to the attention of the local authority, along with dedicated paperwork such as: checklists for specific groups, a notification form, a clear pathway for notifications, a knowledge and agreement form and a consistent provision map template.

A greater proportion of EHC needs assessments initiated in each month now originate from parental requests and notifications from professionals, when compared to data from our WSoA in May 2018. Detailed monthly data shows a peak of 38% for parental requests in one month last year, and several months where notifications from professionals accounted for 5-6% of initiated EHC needs assessments. We do also receive requests directly from young people, although these do remain rare.

Overall, we have seen a significant increase in the number of requests for EHC needs assessments and we have developed a demand management strategy that we plan to further develop over the Autumn term in conjunction with schools/educational settings and our Parent Carer Forum.

Advice Champions – We have established a number of advice champions who are responsible for ensuring the quality of advice from their services and for establishing and embedding any service-specific advice standards. This network meets regularly and have contributed to the development of new advice templates, which were developed in coproduction with the Parent Carer Forum.

Improvements to panel - Since the previous inspection, we have made various improvements to the multi-agency panel used during EHC needs assessments in order to improve its efficacy, including: amalgamating 3 separate panels for different age groups into a single panel with different timeslots; saving time by automating many aspects of the panel process; expanding the panel membership to enhance the professional input involved; plus reviewing and amending guidance for panel members, and providing training for all panel members (new and existing) to ensure processes were both effective and consistent.

A subsequent review of panel was jointly undertaken by a Quality Assurance Consultant and a Consultant Principle Education Psychologist during 2019 to evaluate the improvements made to panel. Based upon this and the initial experience of the new Head of Service as Chair of the panel, further improvements are now scheduled. This includes re-considering the use of age-specific panels.

The introduction of a triage process has also had a positive effect on the panel as it removed the need for 6 to 8 people to read through all of the paperwork relating to children (which could take at least 4-5 hours per panel member depending on the size of the agenda) where the need to assess was very obvious and this decision could be made by 2 SEND Keyworkers. Triage is currently being undertaken by the SEND Locality Managers and the interim Manager of the Annual Review Team. This reduces the number of cases going to Panel and allows more time for the Panel to properly consider cases that are presented, thereby improving decision making. In addition, all requests are triaged within 1 week of receipt – this previously took up to 3 weeks to reach the Panel decision point.

Improved letter formats - During 2019, we worked with a range of representatives to review and amend all letters used during the EHC needs assessment process. Following a suggestion from parent carer representatives, the letters were re-structured under clear headings describing different aspects such as: what the letter is about, what parent/carers need to do, what will happen next and where to go for further information. Further changes were also made to the letters earlier this year following feedback from SEND managers and other services, and changes will continue to be made to the letters as needed.

IT developments - We have provided over 135 settings with access to share information from annual review meetings directly within the local authority's case management system, and have also enabled health professionals in all provider trusts to access this case management system. We are

also working with the supplier of our case management system and our Parent Carer Forum on the development of a parental portal to enable parent carers to access their child's EHC Plan electronically.

Streamlined consultation process - We have taken significant steps to streamline processes relating to consultations with educational settings and strengthen decision making. This includes the development of a flowchart for decision making in line with the ladder of support (which includes an authorisation step and clear indication of when commissioning should be involved) and a consultation form to record the consultation steps that have been taken in the Local Authority's case management system (Liquid Logic), including fields to formally record when communication has occurred with parents and settings. The new Consultation form and processes also link with the electronic Annual Review process to enable schools to complete it for change of placement requests. Training on the revised Consultation processes and form was carried out with all Local Authority SEND Staff, local SENCOs and with Cheshire East Information, Advice and Support. A Locality Manager with oversight of all consultations has also been identified and a comprehensive report has been developed to enable all consultations to be monitored at the SEND weekly planning meetings. Data from reports in early February 2020 showed that the new process and form was starting to be used for consultations for both new EHC needs assessments and change of placement requests.

Service reviews - External Peer reviews were undertaken in October and November 2018 for our Educational Psychology (EP) Service, the Cheshire East Autism Team and our Sensory Inclusion Service; however the outcome of these reviews was not as useful as we would have liked in terms of supporting change. Therefore, independent local authority officers (outside of the SEND service) undertook a further review of the service offer and processes within each of these teams. The internal reviews have provided some clearer outcomes and recommendations that will support the Head of Service for Quality Development and Specialist Services, and the Team Managers, to move forward with improvements to team processes and ways of working.

We have appointed new Team Managers for the Sensory Inclusion Service and the Cheshire East Autism Team, and have also worked on a redesign of the working practice of our EP Service, which will move to trading with schools. This will be piloted during the 2020 Autumn term and then implemented on a phased basis from January 2021. The Cheshire East Autism Team have revised their offer to schools from January 2020 and this will be reviewed after 12 months.

4.5. Quality of EHC plans

We developed a comprehensive checklist for assessing the quality of EHC Plans but this was too detailed to implement from our starting point. We therefore developed a set of 'non-negotiables' for EHC Plans, along with more detailed quality standards, in order to drive up quality and consistency of plans and provided training on these for officers within the SEND team.

As we have had a range of agency staff and staff turnover it has taken longer than we would have liked to embed use of our EHC Plan non-negotiables and quality standards. From January 2020 the service has been staffed by permanent staff, and these quality tools are now fully embraced and embedded in practice with much clearer management oversight.

We have worked with services providing advice to agree quality standards and assurance processes for EHC needs assessments and EHC Plans; this includes publishing guidance for health and social care professionals on writing advice for EHC needs assessments and establishing a monthly multi-agency Quality Audit Group to assess quality of EHC Plans.

The Designated Clinical Officer continues to provide close monitoring and oversight of the quality of all health advice for EHC needs assessments and any themes or specific causes for concern are fed back to the providers, CCG and Local Authority.

A SEND QA Consultant was brought in on an interim basis in 2019; this consultant undertook a review of the stages that lead to the writing of an EHC Plan in order to make recommendations for ensuring that each step is robust and delivers a quality outcome.

We re-enforced additional quality assurance steps during the EHC needs assessment process. SEND Keyworkers undertake peer-to-peer moderation and check drafted EHC Plans against the non-negotiables, with additional oversight by team managers. However, based upon our learning to date, we are now piloting replacing peer to peer reviews, and are planning the implementation of a new process for quality assurance by SEND team staff during the EHC needs assessment process.

We have had various iterations of a quality assurance panel since the previous SEND inspection. A revised panel (referred to as 'our multi-agency Quality Audit Group') was established in December 2019 and is chaired by the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO). This has resulted in a sustainable arrangement which is impacting on the quality of EHC Plans. The group meets on a monthly basis, with a focus on a different locality each time, and reviews a sample of new and revised (following Annual Review) EHC Plans. Detailed meeting notes record overall gradings, and section-by-section gradings, for each audited plan, along with actions to be undertaken and clear feedback on the quality of each Plan. This information is used to feedback to individual keyworkers and inform learning and development plans for professionals going forward.

In order to drive improvement in the quality of EHC Plans, a number of officers across the various services involved in SEND were identified to quality assure all draft EHC Plans using the agreed quality standards. This has been sustained for 6 months and has led to improvements. The officers shared feedback with the individuals writing the EHC Plans, and common themes from all officers were also collated. Now we have established improved quality, we are moving to a sampling system for quality assurance of EHC Plans and to a sustainable quality management system rather than the current quality control system.

4.6. Annual Reviews

We recognise that annual reviews provide an ideal opportunity to review and improve the content of EHC Plans, and they are therefore a key part of our drive to improve the quality of our existing EHC Plans (in addition to improving the quality of new EHC Plans). We have undertaken substantial work to improve the timeliness, processes and quality of our Annual Reviews for EHC Plans, for example:

- Following sign off of our WSOA in 2018, we utilised additional capacity through an external provider (Enhance EHC Ltd.) to assist the SEND team with short term review processes for current EHC plans. Enhance EHC Ltd. completed their work at the end of July 2019.
- Following this, we put in place an interim dedicated team to focus on timeliness and quality of annual reviews.
- In order to remove inefficient paper-based systems, we worked to extend the digital annual review processes to settings, and to date, we have provided over 135 settings with access to share information from annual review meetings directly within the local authority's case management system. We are continuing to roll this out and will be extending this to early years and independent/out of borough settings in the Autumn term.
- We also established a multi-agency Annual Review Working Group, which includes representation from our Parent Carer Forum. This group co-produced a wide variety of detailed information on processes, timings and responsibilities for annual reviews, which was published on a dedicated section of our Local Offer in July 2020. Letters on the new expectations and timeliness have been issued to all schools and all parents of children and young people with EHC Plans. Significant work has also been taking place on the development of trackers for annual reviews (which mirror those for new assessments), along with data cleansing exercises to ensure that all annual review information within our case management system is accurate.
- EHC Plans that are revised following annual reviews are subject to the same quality assurance tools described above, and revised plans are also regularly sampled for quality checks by the multi-agency Quality Audit Group.

4.7. Training

A variety of training and development opportunities have been undertaken with SEND professionals across all agencies since the introduction of our WSoA in 2018. This began with the following training in 2018:

- the Council for Disabled Children delivered 2 multi-agency training sessions focused on producing holistic, outcome-focused EHC Plans.
- the Service Manager for Children with Disabilities and colleagues delivered training on the EHC needs assessment process and input into EHC needs assessments and EHC Plans to early help and social care professionals across children's and adults' services. We are currently refreshing the content of this training in order to embark on another round of training sessions.

- NDTi delivered targeted training to health professionals on a) EHC Plans – aspirations, outcomes and provision and b) joint working and holistic planning

Since then, we have commissioned additional training, such as training on SEN and the Law for SEND Team officers. This has been recommissioned to deliver with all SEND staff and across the SEND Partnership.

In 2019, SEND training with a focus on early identification for Health Visitors (HVs) was rolled out and reached over 100 staff through a series of locality-based training sessions. In the same year, we also utilised weekly support and training workshop sessions for SEND Keyworkers and other stakeholders, such as the EP service and Inclusion Quality Team, which were focused on improving the quality of EHC Plans.

More recently, a number of workshops have been held for SEND Keyworkers. These included an outcomes workshop in November 2019 and an Advice Writers workshop in December 2019. This was followed up by a Plan Writing workshop in February 2020. A bespoke SEND induction and training plan is being devised based on learning needs and in line with the Council's corporate workforce development plans. This will be implemented from September 2020 and will then be embedded into ongoing practice with regular CPD and training. The Parent Carer Forum will be designing and delivering a session on parental perspectives.

We have also scheduled further workshop sessions with the CDC on holistic outcomes in EHC Plans for September 2020. This will be a refresher for staff that attended the 2018 sessions and ensure that new staff have had the same training, whilst also acting as a means of checking our progress against improving the quality of EHC Plans and our processes over the last 2 years. The sessions also include facilitated work on action planning around our priority areas.

In addition to training sessions, we have contacted and worked with other local authorities and CCGs for support and guidance around the quality of EHC Plans, quality of advice and EP good practice, with one local authority acting as a critical friend to provide external quality oversight and contributions to staff development sessions.

We have delivered a number of termly conferences for Cheshire East SENCOs to provide local, regional and national updates, continuing professional development and networking opportunities for all professionals involved in SEND in schools and settings. The number of attendees has risen from 35 to 235 (including 156 SENCOs) at the last conference on 7th February 2020.

5. Listening to Feedback

Health professionals survey – Annual surveys are carried out with health professionals to gather views on their confidence around SEND processes and knowledge, and to gather their feedback on current SEND practices. To date, surveys have been carried out in October 2018 and October 2019. Results from the surveys inform future training and development from the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) and inform the agendas of future health provider reference groups.

SEND Team Survey – We have recently conducted a survey of SEND Keyworkers and Business Support Officers to ensure that we have a clear picture of their skills and can tailor support and development appropriately. The results of this survey are currently being used to inform a training needs analysis and to plan future training and development opportunities for the team.

Parent Carer Forum – We have worked hard to improve relationships and engagement with the Parent Carer Forum. The Forum have worked with us to develop a SEND Communication and Engagement strategy (which includes an action plan). Parent Carer Forum representatives participate actively in all levels of the SEND Partnership (from working groups and workstreams to the SEND Partnership Board) and Heads of Service and other key professionals regularly attend their meetings. The Director of Education has established informal meetings with Parent Carer Forum representatives so that she can hear first-hand from them about how things are feeling for parents and focus improvements appropriately. These have continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic via video calls. The SEND Locality Teams are working with the Parent Carer Forum to establish regular locality Coffee Mornings so that parents can meet their Locality team informally. We have worked together on a number of joint events and representatives are regularly invited to our SENCO conferences. Parent Carers have been heavily involved in the development of our refreshed Quality Assurance Framework, and have made significant contributions to the content and action plan in order to ensure that it accurately describes their view of 'what good looks like in Cheshire East'.

Wider Parent Carer Feedback - In January 2020, we introduced a new online parent carer survey; we plan to run this annually, with the same questions on EHC needs assessments, as one method of measuring our progress and any changes in parental satisfaction. Headline results from this survey relating to the EHC needs assessment process and quality of EHC Plans have been included in section 3 of this report. We hope to see satisfaction figures increase further in the next survey (planned for January 2021).

Further to the online survey, a telephone survey was carried out in February 2020 with a dip sample of parent carers whose child had recently had a new EHC Plan finalised. Again, some headline results from this survey have been included in section 3 of this report. Over half of the respondents of this survey (65%) were satisfied with the overall EHC needs assessment process. However, we appreciate that this was not the case for all respondents and know that there is further work to be done. Direct comments from this survey included the following:

- *Communication was good, and the plan took all their child's needs into consideration.*
- *The assessor was excellent, she kept me informed throughout the process and was always approachable. Her communication was great and it was really helpful to have a named contact during the process.*
- *Kept really well informed – we met the assessor who spelt out all the steps and what to expect for us. Very pleased with the outcome as X's needs were identified. Pleased we could comment on the plan. Could tell that the assessor had a very good relationship with the school which worked well. This is our 1st experience and was very good overall.*

In addition to scheduled surveys, we recognise the importance of gathering routine feedback for all new EHC needs assessments wherever possible, and are now collecting satisfaction information when finalising EHC plans so that we have regular feedback from our parent carers about what is and isn't working well during the process.

Youth Forum - The SEND Youth Forum allows children and young people with SEND or any additional needs to come together to influence change in wider SEND services. Additionally there are termly events for 5-11 year olds and 11-16 year olds where commissioners and other colleagues can capture the voice of SEND children and young people. The Participation team also deliver activity days with early years children with SEND and parents/carers to capture their voice through interactive workshops and sessions. Children and young people were involved in the development of the Cheshire East SEND Quality Assurance Framework and they have a section in this document dedicated to their views.

Complaints - The number of complaints received relating to EHC needs assessments and EHC Plans within 12 month periods has shown an overall reduction when compared to our performance at the time of our WSoA – with a reduction from 110 complaints in the 12 months up to 1st May 2018 to 74 complaints in the 12 months up to 1st July 2020. This indicates some increase in satisfaction amongst parent carers with the EHC needs assessment process, however we acknowledge that there is still further work to do to.

Ongoing analysis of SEND complaints has shown a shift in complaint themes since our previous inspection – initially, a large majority of complaints related to timeliness, but as this has improved, complaint themes are now spread across a number of areas such as communication, staffing and provision/placements. We anticipate that improvements relating to co-production (as described above) and staff recruitment and training will begin to have a positive impact on further reducing the number of complaints going forward. Complaints relating to SEND are a standing item on SEND management meetings and additional management meetings led by the Director of Education and 14-19 Skills to ensure that learning is taken forward and agreed actions implemented.

Monitoring – in order to drive up the overall quality of support for children and young people with SEND, we have also undertaken work to monitor support received in settings. During 2018 and 2019 our Inclusion Quality Team (IQ Team) conducted SEND Reviews of all Cheshire East schools (a separate review was undertaken for settings with resource provisions, which is outlined below). The purpose of the SEND reviews was to make contact and build relationships with professionals supporting SEND in schools, quality assure and support settings in using the Cheshire East Toolkit for SEND and associated paperwork, and to capture information on overall SEND needs and provision (number of pupils at first concerns and SEN Support levels, plus number of pupils with EHC Plans). SEN Support Plans were also monitored as part of the SEND Review, and where quality issues are identified in outcomes or provision, the IQ Team either advise on how to improve these, book in and deliver training, or organise a further meeting for a more detailed discussion. The IQ Team also captured how provision to support SEND was being delivered in settings including the

interventions, Teaching Assistant support, use of the SEND budget and where further advice and support was provided from. The output from the SEND review for each school was a 'School SEND Action Plan' and a report summarising identified themes from the reviews has also been produced and will be used to inform future training activities. In January 2020 contact was made with all settings who had received a review before December 2019, beginning the SEND evaluation cycle.

During the 2019 Autumn Term, detailed quality assurance reviews were undertaken in all 13 current Resource Provisions to generate a valuable insight into everyday practice in supporting some of our most vulnerable young people. A detailed report of findings was generated, along with a series of comprehensive recommendations, which are being used to create an action plan to further improve provision.

Gathering general feedback on the SEND team - In addition to scheduled surveys for specific audiences, SEND team members also carry a link to a short satisfaction survey in their email signatures, which can be completed by anybody (young person, parent carer or professional) in order to give feedback on their interaction with the SEND team. The Council's Compliance and Customer Relations Team also collates compliments that are received regarding members of the SEND team – again, these can be originate from anywhere, including from other professionals, settings or residents. A small selection of compliments and short survey responses are shown below:

"I feel compelled to write to you thank you so much for the tremendous service we as a family have received from Cheshire East Council... [X]'s school applied for an EHCP as sadly they were unable to meets his complex needs. I have to praise your SEN Team, in particular [Y], who continually updated me regarding the progress of the application. The process was extremely efficient and dealt with very quickly from start to finish (probably only a matter of weeks)."

[Parent Carer, June 2019]

"Two of my EHCPs have been finalised recently, both within the time allocated. The draft documents have been well written and the parents have been very happy with them. We feel that the hours allocated reflect the level of need appropriately. This is partly due to fantastic support from our link EP [X] who has captured the needs of each child and provided helpful advice that is then reflected in the quality of the final EHCP"

[SENCO, Cheshire East School, September 2019]

"It's great to be able to talk openly and with shared understanding with us parents, my son, teachers and professionals at the EHCP reviews to ensure my son is getting the help he needs."

[Parent Carer, July 2019]

"It was only a pleasure to deal with such a wonderful keyworker [X] and her knowledge. She went out of the way to assist me and communicate with me each step of the process what an asset you have a jewel to have in your team. The whole process is daunting and she made me feel at ease and comfortable and take the fear out of the process."

[Anonymous, November 2019]

“Everybody we have had contact with has been extremely supportive throughout the process. In addition, even though we have all faced some challenges with the current circumstances we have not felt that has in anyway hindered the process at all. [SEND Keyworker] has kept us constantly updated and we could not have asked for any more.”

[Parent Carer, June 2020]

6. Learning and next steps

Although quality assurance checks of both new and amended EHC Plans have shown some improvements in EHC Plan quality since the previous inspection, in line with our agreed standards, we recognise that additional action is required to further improve EHC Plan quality and work is therefore in progress to implement an improved and sustainable quality assurance system based on our learning to date. We are also undertaking further review work on our EHC Plan template to see whether further changes would assist with our drive to improve the quality of final EHC Plans, in conjunction with our wider quality assurance system.

We will also be working to implement our Quality Assurance Framework for SEND, and its associated action plan, in order to drive up quality for SEND in all areas of our Partnership.

Improving parental satisfaction and co-production is an ongoing priority. We are working with parent carers to implement our Communication and Engagement Strategy in order to further strengthen ongoing communication with parent carers. In addition to the ongoing work to strengthen and embed co-production outlined in previous sections, plans are in place to develop preparation templates for parents and to develop videos of a good ‘Working TOGETHER’ meeting in order to ensure that parents are supported in what to expect – this again is a recommendation from our Parent Carer Forum. We will also be allocating specific Keyworkers to our most dissatisfied parent carers in order to focus on building improved relationships with them.

Multi-agency discussions are continuing regarding the Cheshire East Dynamic Support Database for children and there are further improvements to make to ensure this is clear and joined up efficiently across agencies whilst also linking in with the EHC needs assessment process and developments around Autism. This is being progressed on a regional footprint in line with the Transforming Care programme.