

**CHESHIRE EAST HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**  
**Reports Cover Sheet**

<b>Title of Report:</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Improvement Update
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2021
<b>Written by:</b>	Cheshire East 0-25 SEND Partnership
<b>Contact details:</b>	Jacky Forster (Chair of the Cheshire East 0-25 SEND Partnership)
<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing Board Lead:</b>	Ged Rowney (Interim Director of Children's Services, Cheshire East Council)

**Executive Summary**

<b>Is this report for:</b>	Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Decision <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Why is the report being brought to the board?</b>	To keep the Board updated on progress with the work of the Cheshire East 0-25 SEND Partnership.		
<b>Please detail which, if any, of the Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy priorities this report relates to?</b>	Creating a place that supports health and wellbeing for everyone living in Cheshire East <input type="checkbox"/> Improving the mental health and wellbeing of people living and working in Cheshire East <input type="checkbox"/> Enable more people to live well for longer <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Please detail which, if any, of the Health &amp; Wellbeing Principles this report relates to?</b>	Equality and Fairness <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility <input type="checkbox"/> Integration <input type="checkbox"/> Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Key Actions for the Health &amp; Wellbeing Board to address. Please state recommendations for action.</b>	Members of Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to: a. Note the provided updates relating to preparations for the SEND Re-visit; and b. Note and endorse the contents of the SEND Self-evaluation in Appendix 1.		
<b>Has the report been considered at any other committee meeting of the Council/meeting of the CCG board/stakeholders?</b>	Prior to this meeting, this report has been considered by all relevant Directors within the Council's Children and Families Service and the Cheshire CCG.		

<b>Has public, service user, patient feedback/consultation informed the recommendations of this report?</b>	<p>Feedback from a wide range of professionals across education, health and care and members of the public (including parent carers) contributed to the development of the SEND Written Statement of Action and the Action Plan within it.</p> <p>We are continuing to use both data and feedback as a measure of the impact of our improvement actions.</p>
<b>If recommendations are adopted, how will residents benefit? Detail benefits and reasons why they will benefit.</b>	All improvements relating to SEND are focused on improving experiences and outcomes for Cheshire East children and young people with SEND, and their families.

## **1 Report Summary**

- 1.1 Following the Ofsted and CQC Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Local Area Inspection in March 2018, Cheshire East was asked to produce a Written Statement of Action which described the actions the area would take to improve identified significant weaknesses relating to Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans and Autism pathways. Regular updates on SEND improvements have been considered by the Board throughout 2019 and 2020. This report provides the latest update, and in particular, shares our SEND Self-evaluation and the latest information on our local preparations for the SEND Re-visit.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members of Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to:
- Note the provided updates relating to preparations for the SEND Re-visit; and
  - Note and endorse the contents of the SEND Self-evaluation in Appendix 1.

## **3 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Board is the overarching governance board for the 0-25 SEND Partnership. This report ensures that the members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are updated on SEND improvement work and have the opportunity to provide relevant support and challenge to the 0-25 SEND Partnership around improvements relating to SEND, in line with the SEND Written Statement of Action.

## **4 Impact on Health and Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

- 4.1 This report focuses on improvements to services for Cheshire East children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND, and is linked to all of the Health and Wellbeing Board priority outcomes.

## **5 Background and Options**

### **5.1 Introduction and background**

- 5.1.1 In March 2018, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out a joint local area inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Cheshire East. The inspection looked at how effectively partners in Cheshire East work together to

identify, assess and meet the needs of children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND to improve their outcomes.

- 5.1.2 As a result of two areas of significant weakness, Cheshire East was required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to Ofsted that explains what the local area is doing to address the identified areas:
- Area 1 - the timeliness, process and quality of education, health and care (EHC) plans
  - Area 2 - the lack of an effective autism spectrum disorder (ASD) pathway and unreasonable waiting times

- 5.1.3 Our WSOA was considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board in July 2018 and was subsequently deemed fit for purpose by Ofsted in October 2018. Since then, significant progress has been made in improving SEND services. Whether or not we have made sufficient progress will be considered in detail as part of the Ofsted/CQC SEND re-visit.

## 5.2 The impact of COVID-19 on Ofsted/CQC SEND Inspections and Re-visits

- 5.2.1 In previous updates to the Health and Wellbeing Board, we advised that Ofsted and the CQC were due to carry out a SEND re-visit in Cheshire East before the end of April 2020 (in line with re-visits being carried out within 18 months of an area's WSOA being approved by Ofsted). The sole purpose of the re-visit is to determine whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed in the WSOA (including an evaluation of the impact of the actions taken).
- 5.2.2 On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020, all Ofsted inspections (including Local area SEND inspections and SEND re-visits) were suspended as a result of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.
- 5.2.3 From autumn 2020, Ofsted and CQC have been carrying out joint interim visits to local areas regarding their SEND arrangements, in lieu of SEND inspections or re-visits. These visits are intended to support improvements and to understand the impact of the pandemic on children and young people with SEND and their families. The visits do not result in a published letter or graded judgement. Details of arrangements for these visits were provided in our September 2020 update to the Board.
- 5.2.4 Latest intelligence indicates that Ofsted and the CQC are likely to re-commence routine local area SEND Inspections and SEND re-visits from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. However, this will most likely be contingent on any further nationally-imposed restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 5.3 Arrangements for SEND monitoring and inspection preparation in Cheshire East

- 5.3.1 Our most recent SEND monitoring visit with representatives from the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I) took place on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021.
- 5.3.2 In their notes from the last monitoring meeting, the DfE and NHSE/I representatives noted that *'Cheshire East have clearly made significant progress since the inspection'*.

5.3.3 Following the Ofsted/CQC SEND re-visit, if Cheshire East is considered to have made sufficient progress, the formal quarterly support and challenge visits that we currently have with the DfE and NHSE/I will cease. Our next SEND monitoring visit with the DfE and NHSE/I is scheduled to take place in June 2021; however this will be dependent upon the outcome of the Ofsted/CQC SEND re-visit should this have taken place by then.

5.3.4 We are continuing with preparations for our Ofsted/CQC SEND re-visit. This includes preparing key documents to evidence progress, carrying out communication and engagement with all stakeholders and ensuring arrangements are in place to respond quickly upon notification of the re-visit.

#### 5.4 SEND Self-evaluation

5.4.1 As part of our preparations for the latest North West Peer Review and Annual Conversation with Ofsted, we have updated our SEND Self-Evaluation. This has been attached in Appendix 1 and provides a detailed update for the Board on improvements, strengths, areas for developments and key priorities for the next 12 months across various aspects of SEND.

#### 5.5 Additional developments since the SEND Self-Evaluation

5.5.1 Since the Self-evaluation was finalised, further significant developments have taken place across a number of SEND areas.

5.5.2 Timeliness of EHC needs assessments has remained high since the start of 2021 with 100% of EHC Plans issued within the statutory 20-week timescale in January 2021 (excluding exceptions), with an average time of 16.4 weeks for completion. As at 19<sup>th</sup> February 2021, there are no requests awaiting advice from our Educational Psychology for over 6 weeks, and timeliness of health advice remains high (with 93.5% of health advice being submitted within 6 weeks in January 2021). The numbers of complaints, and number of appeals registered with the First-Tier Tribunal, have both also shown a further fall since December 2020 (with a reduction from 81 complaints in the 12 months prior to 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 to 70 complaints in the 12 months prior to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021).

5.5.3 A multi-agency Preparing for Adulthood strategy was approved by the SEND Partnership Board on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021, and work on an implementation plan is underway. In addition, we have also started to carry out a specific programme of work with the National Development Team for inclusion (NDTi) around Preparing for Adulthood (PfA), which includes targeted PfA audits of 48 cases, along with the next phase of SEND ignition events and Person Centred Planning training to support transition of some of our young people with the most complex needs.

5.5.4 The Cheshire East Autism Team (CEAT) has recently been accredited as an Autism Education Trust (AET) Training Hub. The AET is a not-for-profit organisation established by the Department of Education and is led by two autism charities: The National Autistic Society and Ambitious about Autism. Cheshire East have acquired an all phases licence which will allow us to deliver accredited training modules to early years settings, schools and post-16 colleges. This will ensure a consistent, early intervention approach to support

our children and young people with autism through all stages of their education at the earliest opportunity. Training to early years settings will be delivered jointly by the Cheshire East Early Start Team and CEAT. Training for schools and post-16 settings will be delivered by CEAT. Rollout of this training will begin towards the end of this half term.

- 5.5.5 Since 2017, we have planned investment into additional SEN places in specialist provision through the use of our SEND Sufficiency Statement and Three Year Provision Plan. An updated Sufficiency Statement and refreshed Provision Plan were approved by the SEND Partnership Board on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Following this, we sought expressions of interest to operate new provisions, with a deadline for submissions of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021. These are currently being considered by the relevant multi-agency workstream, and we will share details of the proposals to further expand local provision in a future update to the Committee. If we deliver all the places outlined within the updated SEN Provision Plan, we will have achieved a 48% increase in local provision through 9 additional specialist SEN Provisions.
- 5.5.6 Our Access to SEND Services Framework was also approved by the SEND Partnership Board in November 2020; this sets out our approach to managing demand for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments and Plans. A key aspect of this focuses on further strengthening support at the SEN Support level to ensure that we have the right input and strategies in place early in order to meet needs without the need for a EHC Plan, where this is appropriate.
- 5.5.7 Our new multi-agency SEND Induction and Training Programme is well underway. Each phase will have a specific theme to connect and maximise learning. For Spring 2021 the focus is on 'Understanding SEND' and 'Positive Communication and Relationships' and 14 new training sessions are being delivered from January – March 2021. This supports us in ensuring that there is effective CPD for staff across services within the LA and our partners.
- 5.5.8 Our annual survey of parent carers around the two WSOA areas has recently closed and we will share the feedback once this is analysed. We had a record number of responses, with almost double the number of responses from the previous year (345 compared to 181 in 2020). We are currently finalising a children and young people's survey.

## 5.6 SEND Strategy and future improvements

- 5.6.1 The 0-25 SEND Partnership Board has continued to meet virtually to oversee our SEND improvements. We are currently in the process of reviewing all workstream action plans and targets for 2021 and beyond. At the last meeting of the SEND Partnership Board on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021, we held an extended workshop session to discuss and agree our future shared priorities across the themes of education, health, care and working TOGETHER (linking in with our shared definition of co-production).
- 5.6.2 Information from this workshop session and our SEND Self-evaluation will now be used to update our shared SEND Strategy. We will be engaging and consulting with partners during the development of this shared Strategy and will share the updated document with the Board in a future update.

## **6 Access to Information**

6.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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