



# Cheshire East Overview of progress against our SEND WSOA

January 2020

## 1. Purpose of this document

As a result of the joint local area special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) inspection undertaken by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in March 2018, the area of Cheshire East was required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to Ofsted that explains how the local area will tackle the following areas of significant weakness:

- the timeliness, process and quality of education, health and care (EHC) plans
- the lack of an effective autism spectrum disorder (ASD) pathway and unreasonable waiting times

The local authority and both of the area's clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) were jointly responsible for submitting the WSOA to Ofsted, and our WSOA was deemed fit for purpose by Ofsted in October 2018. This document provides an update on the progress made in each area of our WSOA and the impact that improvements have had on children and young people and their families, alongside an update on progress made in other SEND areas not included in our WSOA.

## 2. Summary of progress and performance within SEND

### What's working well:

- Our 20 week timeliness for finalising EHC Plans has significantly improved over the last 12 months
- Engagement with SENCOs, including conferences
- Participation with young people through SEND Youth Forums
- A number of performance management trackers are well embedded and providing good management information
- Quality assurance framework coproduced by all partners launched in Jan 2020
- Non-negotiable Quality Criteria established for EHC Plans
- EHC needs assessment process reviews and developments – including notifications by professionals and placement consultations
- SEND Toolkit – working well in supporting settings
- All age Autism Strategy launched
- Autism timeliness is now within the NICE guidance requirements
- Increase in local SEN provision, including new free school for children with SEMH

### Our key priorities:

- Complete the restructure and induction of permanent appointments to the SEND Service
- Implement our SEND Communication and Engagement Strategy to further improve relationships with schools and parents
- Ensure arrangements to sustain Autism timeliness and monitor impact in timeliness of other assessments
- Improve annual review timeliness and quality
- Transitions and Preparing for Adulthood (PfA)
- Further improve quality of EHC Plans
- Co-production – Working TOGETHER meetings
- Implement the new high needs funding model
- Implement the provision plan to increase capacity within Cheshire East
- Undertake improvement actions resulting from reviews of resourced provision

### **Areas we are working to improve:**

- The quality of EHC Plans – with a focus on existing EHC Plans through annual reviews
- Satisfaction of parent carers through a refreshed Communication and Engagement Strategy
- The quality and effectiveness of annual reviews of EHC Plans
- Ensure planning for transitions and Preparing for Adulthood takes place earlier and is more effective
- Implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework
- Transport, including better communication and engagement with parent carers
- Better access to health services, including CAMHS
- Increase the number of children accessing their education within the borough

## **3. Progress against our Written Statement of Action**

### **Area 1: The timeliness, process and quality of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans**

#### **3.1. Progress**

To improve the significant weaknesses around timeliness, process and quality, we have:

- Finalised, and consulted on, a new structure for the SEND team and the Educational Psychology (EP) Service. As part of the new structure, the Council has committed an additional £500,000 in 2019-20 to increase capacity across the SEND service. We have recently appointed individuals to a significant number of posts within the new structure and, as of January 2020, the majority of posts in the new structure are filled. As an interim measure whilst new staff join the service, we are also continuing to fund a high level of additional agency staff for EP assessments and EHCP writing in order to provide consistent levels of service. The current Head of Service for SEND is leaving Cheshire East in January 2020. Two temporary Head of Service posts have been created for the next 12 months in order to ensure that we can move the improvement of the service forward with greater pace. A new temporary Head of Service with responsibility for the SEND Locality teams has been appointed and is in post. The other temporary Head of Service post is currently being recruited to. Officers are also now in post for the three Locality Manager roles within the SEND service.
- Undertaken a review of the service offer and processes within the Cheshire East Autism Team and Educational Psychology service. A review of our Sensory Inclusion Service is currently in progress.
- Created weekly reports (using data from comprehensive live trackers) which provide detailed information on the number and timeliness of EP advice requests and ongoing EHC needs assessment requests.
- Established weekly operational meetings for SEND Team managers focused on timeliness of EHC needs assessments, which provide management oversight and challenge around timeliness of EP advice and EHC Plans using the EP and EHCP trackers described above.
- Developed a health scorecard so that there is now consistent information gathered by both CCGs from all provider trusts in order to track performance. Performance data within both health and the local authority continues to be refined, and the Local Authority and CCGs each have an identified Business Intelligence officer with a focus on SEND.
- Continued to work with partners on links between Care, Education and Treatment Reviews, the Dynamic Support Database and the EHC needs assessment process.

- Provided over 110 settings with access to share information from annual review meetings directly within the local authority's case management system.
- Developed a set of 'non-negotiables' for EHC Plans to drive up quality and consistency of plans and provided training on these for officers within the SEND team.
- Worked with services providing advice to agree quality standards and assurance processes, including establishing a Multi-agency Quality Assurance Panel to identify quality issues in EHC Plans.
- Contacted and worked with other local authorities for support and guidance around quality of EHC Plans and EP good practice, with one local authority acting as a critical friend to provide external quality oversight and contributions to staff development sessions.
- Put in place an interim dedicated team to focus on timeliness and quality of annual reviews.
- Rolled out SEND training with a focus on early identification for Health Visitors (HVs), which reached over 100 staff over a series of locality-based training sessions during this year.
- Put in place 2 seconded part-time Health Visitors (one for Eastern Cheshire and one for South Cheshire) to act as specialist HVs for SEND.
- Enabled health professionals in all provider trusts to access the local authority's case management system.
- Held a multi-agency workshop focusing on 'Defining Excellence across SEND' on 3rd October 2019 with a wide range of representatives from across education, health and care services, along with parent carers, to input into our refreshed Quality Assurance (QA) Framework for SEND by considering what 'good' looks like in Cheshire East.
- Established weekly support and training workshop sessions for SEND Keyworkers and other stakeholders, such as the EP service and Inclusion Quality Team, focused on improving the quality of EHC Plans.
- Established a multi-agency Quality Assurance Task and Finish Group that meets on a monthly basis to drive forward improvements relating to the quality of EHC needs assessments and EHC Plans.
- 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.
- Prepared new processes relating to placement consultations, including a flowchart for decision making (in line with the ladder of support) and a consultation form to formally record steps that have been taken, such as communication with parents and settings.
- 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 143.

### 3.2. Impact

- There has been a significant and sustained improvement (decrease) in the number of ongoing EHC needs assessments over 20 weeks, with a reduction from **180 assessments on 17/12/2018** to **46 assessments on 27/05/2019** to **2 assessments on 07/10/2019**.
- In addition to significantly reducing the number of ongoing assessments over 20 weeks, there has also been a continued increase in the number of new EHC Plans issued within 20 weeks each month. During the period January – September 2019, this rose steadily from **11% of EHC Plans in January 2019** to **96% of EHC Plans issued in September 2019**.

- Between January and August 2019, there was a substantial decrease in the number of EHC needs assessments awaiting advice for more than 6 weeks – with a reduction from the highest figure of **159 assessments on 21/01/2019** to **2 assessments on 05/08/2019**. This reflects the significant decrease in the number of EHC needs assessments awaiting advice from the Educational Psychology service for over 6 weeks within the same period - with a reduction from **135 assessments on 28/01/2019** to **1 assessment on 05/08/2019**.
- Recently we have seen an increase in the number of requests awaiting advice for over 6 weeks (including advice from Educational Psychologists) along with an increase in the number of ongoing EHC needs assessments over 20 weeks. As of 12/12/2019, 18% of ongoing EHC needs assessments (41 cases) were over 20 weeks. This has also resulted in a recent dip in the percentage of EHC Plans issued within 20 weeks in each month (75% in October 2019 and 54% in November 2019, excluding exceptions). The current decrease in performance is due to a number of factors, including:
  - A very significant increase in the number of EHC needs assessment requests received in July 2019 (105 requests). The average number of requests in each month in the period January – June 2019 was 47. We have completed a deep-dive analysis of all of the requests and have been working with educational settings and parent/carers to understand the factors leading to this increase and to take steps to improve this in the future.
  - Extended school holidays over the summer period, which has impacted upon the ability of Educational Psychologists (EPs) to meet with pupils and their educational setting. The majority of the assessments that were awaiting advice for more than 6 weeks from our EPs are subject to exceptions to the 20 week timescales, in line with The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014. However, we are monitoring all assessments and this situation carefully to minimise any impacts on overall timeliness. In addition, we have recruited an additional EP who will be starting imminently, and we will be going back out to advert in our continued drive to increase our capacity. We are also introducing triggers where we write to families to keep them informed where an assessment is late and to confirm when the EP assessment will happen.
  - There has been a lot of change within the SEND service due to moving to the new structure which has caused some delays. We previously identified this as a risk and had put in measures to allow agency and permanent posts to overlap, but some staff members have chosen to leave early as they had new assignments and this caused some gaps. As stated above, we have had a number of permanent staff starting recently, or with start dates early in the new year, with just a few vacancies still to fill.
  - As part of our drive around quality, we have reintroduced the 2 co-production meetings held during the EHC needs assessment process. This puts pressure on the timeline; however parents tell us they prefer EHC Plans to be 1 – 2 weeks late and have a co-production meeting and improved quality, over a drive to achieve timeliness.
- We are expecting that some additional EHC needs assessments will have slipped beyond 20 weeks in December 2019 but are confident that our timeliness will improve again in January 2020.
- There has also been a small, recent decrease in the percentage of health advice submitted on time. This has been due to annual leave of key health professionals over the summer period and further compounded by administration issues with one of the therapy teams. Communications have been sent to relevant providers by the Designated Clinical Officer and CCG Associate Director of Commissioning, to ensure that the performance is returned to previous levels and meeting the 95% target.

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

### **3.3. Areas for improvement**

- Although quality assurance checks of both new and amended EHC Plans have shown some improvements in EHC Plan quality since the inspection, in line with our agreed standards, additional action is required to further improve EHC Plan quality, and this is a priority for the SEND Partnership.
- Timeliness of Annual Reviews has improved but there continue to be a number of annual reviews that are out of timescale and improvements to annual reviews have not progressed at the pace we had hoped.
- Although complaint numbers have decreased over the rolling 12 month periods, we acknowledge that further work is needed to meet our targets in relation to both complaints and the numbers of appeals registered with the First-Tier Tribunal. A large majority of complaints relate to timeliness, and we therefore anticipate that our improved timeliness performance 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.

### **3.4. What needs to happen next?**

- Focus on actions to further improve the quality of EHC Plans. There is an agreed recognition that the only way to ensure quality at the end of the EHC needs assessment process is to ensure that the contribution from each stage is of high quality. A SEND QA Consultant was brought in on an interim basis; 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 are continuing to act on the recommendations. This includes looking at how advice for the EHC assessment is written and quality assured and how plan writers use advice to compile the EHC Plan. Advice templates are also undergoing further review.
- Significant work is taking place to improve annual review processes and timeliness, and an interim annual review team has been put in place to drive this forward. This team will be in place until July 2020, when we will review the ongoing capacity needs of the service.
- Staff across agencies will work with families and educational settings to develop clear information and guidance on the Annual Review process, and develop robust tools for management oversight of Annual Review performance.
- Continue to improve parental satisfaction and co-production. We are working with parent carers to implement our Communication and Engagement Strategy in order to further strengthen ongoing communication with parent carers.
- From September 2019, we have re-established the two points of face to face co-production during the EHC needs assessment process, as a means to improve parental satisfaction and ensure the production of a better quality EHC plan that will be agreed by all attendees of the co-production meetings. To further embed our [‘TOGETHER’ approach](#), we are re-naming these as ‘Working TOGETHER’ meetings (as suggested by parent carer representatives within the SEND Partnership). We will also be working together with parents and other stakeholders to further develop and model what a good co-production meeting looks like and ensure these become an



embedded and important part of the EHC needs assessment process through development of further supporting materials (such as videos) and training for all new staff and families.

- Multi-agency discussions have started regarding a Cheshire East Dynamic Support Database for children and there is further work to do to ensure this is introduced in a clear and joined up way which links 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.
- Further development and integration of the health scorecard will be carried out in order to include more data and link in more closely with the Local Authority SEND scorecard. This needs to be available for future SEND Partnership Board meetings to scrutinise.
- Whilst the Local Authority has commissioned additional Occupational Therapy (OT) support to develop skills within the school settings, a business case has been completed for CCGs to enhance the current Sensory OT resource.
- Further consideration to be given to the sufficiency of SALT provision
- Further review of caseloads has led to a temporary increase in capacity. A business case is being developed to request a further £500k growth in the service in order to further embed improvements and enable the service to sustain performance and meet legal/statutory requirements.

## Area 2: The lack of an effective Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pathway and unreasonable waiting times

### 3.5. Progress

Over the past 12 months, work has been undertaken across the area to improve services so that waiting times are reduced as well as working collectively with partners, young people and families to ensure a single equitable offer across Cheshire East. Some of those actions include:

- A revised All Age Autism Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has been developed, which has informed the new All Age Autism Strategy for Cheshire East. This has been coproduced and a multi-agency Implementation Group is in place to ensure delivery and monitoring through an agreed delivery plan within the Strategy, which is updated annually.
- We are investing in our assessment services to bring waiting times in line with the three-month guideline recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. As a result, waiting times for diagnosis have fallen by 80% in one year despite a large rise in referrals.
- Recruitment completed for additional clinical staff to support the multi-disciplinary assessment of Autism. Speech and language therapists specialising in Autism are now in post. The Clinical Care Coordination function is being reviewed to ensure greater consistency across the Cheshire East area.
- In October 2018 there were 478 children and young people waiting for an Autism assessment across Cheshire East with the longest wait being 104 weeks (almost 2 years). By 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019 this had reduced to 29 children and young people waiting longer than 12 weeks and the longest waiting time being 17 weeks. The longest waiting time from referral to start of a specialist multi-disciplinary Autism assessment was less than 12 weeks by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.
- A multi-disciplinary team of healthcare and education experts has been commissioned on a recurring basis to assess the needs of 0 to 4 year olds in the Eastern Cheshire to ensure there is a consistent offer across Cheshire East.

- We are offering consistent early intervention support as part of both a family-centred and settings approach with specialist support being offered in all children's centres, including peer-led groups and workshops through our Early Start Team and seconded Health Visitors.
- We have worked with local charities to commission additional pre and post diagnosis support and training for children, young people and their families. These community-based programmes offer practical help and strategies on issues such as sleep management, sensory advice, anxiety management and positive behavioural support. The programme in Eastern Cheshire has already supported over 120 families and 346 training sessions had been delivered between 1<sup>st</sup> August and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019. This links with NHS and local authority services such as the Cheshire East Autism Team as well as with the valuable support provided by schools and other education settings in Cheshire East. A similar support programme will commence across the rest of Cheshire East in early 2020.
- Communications are being maintained through regular engagement with parents, families and adults with Autism through attendance and presentations at the Parent Carer Forum. There is parent carer representation on the Autism Workstream, Implementation Working Group and Support & Training Working Group.
- A Cheshire East Clinical/Professional Best Practice Group has been established across Health, Education and Care which is meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 to ensure continued improvements and consistency across all the pathways.
- Joining up services in this way will mean that children, young people and their families can access appropriate help and support according to their level of need based on 4 connected pathways, (which are based on the child and family centred 'Thrive Multi-agency Framework'<sup>1</sup>):
  - **Getting advice** - first concerns/early identification
  - **Getting help** - local offer/specialist Autism assessment
  - **Getting more help** - post-diagnostic support
  - **Getting risk support** - prevention of crisis/specialist risk support.
- The four Cheshire CCGs will become the first CCGs in Cheshire and Merseyside to merge on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. The move, which has the support of Cheshire GPs and the public, will bring together the planning and buying of health services across the county and give Cheshire a more powerful voice in championing the needs of local people at regional and national level. We are already working to ensure the integrated Autism specification is being rolled out across the whole of Cheshire.

### 3.6. Development of an Effective Autism Pathway and Addressing Unreasonable Waiting Times

- We have developed a single Integrated Service Specification that has been written and agreed by all partners including feedback from young people and parents. The purpose of this specification is to provide a clear, single commissioning agreement and approach across four commissioning organisations and four statutory providers, to describe how health, education and care will work together to deliver a single, accessible, streamlined, consistent and cost effective Autism assessment pathway, alongside evidence-based and innovative interventions and support.
- The adoption and implementation of a single assessment model/pathway will ensure that the Autism assessment process is aligned and consistent across the whole of the Cheshire East area,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://implementingthrive.org/about-us/the-thrive-framework/>



regardless of the providers used, to deliver equality of assessment and consistent delivery of service.

- The new pre-school Autism assessment pathway for children aged 0-4 years is a collaborative approach which enables children across Cheshire to be referred at an early age regardless of where they live and therefore supporting them with interventions and strategies regardless of whether they are referred onto the pathway or not.
- Additional Speech and Language Therapy resource have been recruited into the multi-disciplinary team to assess children's needs to ensure we are NICE Compliant, as well as an additional business case currently being considered to enhance Sensory OT support.
- There is now Autism specific provision in every Children's Centre, including access to sensory provision, peer support groups, training provided by the Autism Educational Trust, child-centred planning meetings, Play sessions and supported access to the Local Offer.
- There has also been a re-commission of an existing local pre and post diagnostic support programme for parents of school age children with Autism. The course is built around practical activities, interaction and group work to equip parents of children with Autism to develop their communication skills, meet others and learn practical strategies to engage and support children with Autism to maximise their potential.
- Additional Psychiatry time has been implemented in Cheshire East with a specific focus on speeding up formal diagnosis (following completion of multi-disciplinary assessment).
- The waiting list initiative for children and young people (CYP) age 4-19 years has been extended in Eastern Cheshire until 31st December 2019 (£80k new investment).
- The Autism Information Pack for parents is almost complete - final checks are taking place to ensure consistency across providers.
- There has been work to review the range of Autism training for staff (across Cheshire East) – a summary of schools that receive training from CEAT has been compiled and a register will be maintained. The recently published 'Right to be Heard' document – the government's response to the consultation on Autism and LD training for healthcare staffs, is being reviewed. It presents a tiered approach (linked to amount of contact staff have with people):
  - Tier 1 – general awareness
  - Tier 2 – staff routinely caring for people with LD or Autism
  - Tier 3 – those with high degree of autonomy providing care in complex situations

### **3.7. Impact**

- We are able to demonstrate positive outcomes for children, young people and their parents/families through the completion and monitoring of satisfaction questionnaires following the assessment process and diagnostic feedback.
- We have also worked with local charities to bring in more specialist support and training for children, young people and their families. Two of the staff in the assessment team have been nominated by parents for the Autism Professionals Award 2020.
- Written feedback from parents and families who have attended the training programme is very positive (questionnaires are completed pre and post training).
- In terms of addressing the unreasonable waiting times, there has been significant work to redesign and increase capacity across the 4-19 age pathway, including a new clinical triage process and MDT Panels being implemented, with Educational Psychologists and Specialist Teachers from the Cheshire East Autism Team (CEAT) working alongside the Consultant Psychiatrist, Specialist Nurses and Speech and Language Therapists to assess children's needs. As

a result all children/young people waiting in March 2018 in Eastern Cheshire have now been seen. Across Eastern Cheshire for the 4-19 service as at 6th December 2019:

- The longest waiting time is 17 weeks
- 29 CYP are waiting over 3 months
- There are 51 children and young people waiting in total between 1-3 months

### **3.8. Areas for improvement**

- A joint Health and Local Authority comprehensive communications plan is being agreed to ensure service improvements and waiting times are regularly shared with local stakeholders.
- Improvements in the time between completion of assessment and feedback of a diagnosis are currently being looked into and a plan will be agreed to ensure hidden waits do not develop.
- Further development and integration of a single performance dashboard.

### **3.9. What needs to happen next?**

- Continue to monitor Performance of Waiting List Initiative.
- Multi-disciplinary ADOS training is taking place for 15 local professionals on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> January to ensure there is a pool of professionals who are skilled in Autism diagnosis.
- Complete commissioner drop-in sessions for parents/families to ask questions and highlight any individual concerns.
- Finalise 'Prevention of Crisis' pathway and formally publish all 4 pathways.
- Monitor implementation of Integrated Service Specification (ongoing).
- Implement and monitor Cheshire East Communications Plan.
- Implementation of the new commission for Pre and Post Diagnostic Training and Support Programme across South Cheshire (January 2020).

## **4. Progress in other SEND areas not included in the WSOA**

Since Cheshire East's SEND inspection in March 2018, the local area has been on a significant improvement journey. A specific evaluation of the two areas included in our Written Statement of Action (WSOA) is included above. The following content in this section provides details of other actions and improvements that have been made in Cheshire East in relation to SEND beyond the scope of the WSOA.

### **4.1. Multi-agency working and joint commissioning**

There are clear governance arrangements in place to support the work of the local area around SEND. The 0-25 SEND Partnership is well established, with good multi-agency attendance, and is chaired by the Council's Director of Education and Skills to drive forward continuous improvement. An executive group of senior leaders from the Council and the local Health Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) chaired by the Executive Director of People (also holds the role of the Director of Children's Services) is accountable for ensuring that the WSOA is effective in addressing the areas of weakness.

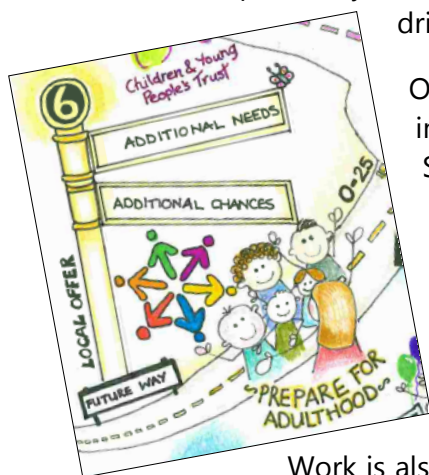


The SEND workstreams have been revised and refocused on the priorities arising from the SEND inspection. Members of the Parent Carer Forum are members at every level of governance arrangements and attend the quarterly monitoring meetings with Department for Education and NHS England representatives in relation to the WSOA.

The SEND Partnership reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board, who oversees progress against the WSOA. These reports are also scrutinised by leadership teams within the Council and Health, as well as by our elected members through our Portfolio holder and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These arrangements ensure that there is effective strategic and political leadership around SEND and robust scrutiny and challenge of multi-agency working and joint commissioning arrangements.

Following a previous inquiry on SEND Reforms, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee established another task and finish group review on the SEND Local Offer for 16-25 Year Olds. The work of this group was endorsed in November 2019.

A new all age Mental Health Partnership Board has been established from December 2019; this new Board is specifically focused on overseeing the delivery of the all age Mental Health Strategy and on driving improvements in mental health support.



Our Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) includes a number of assessments in relation to children with SEND. Cheshire East's Joint Commissioning Strategy is aligned with the outcomes of our new Children and Young People's Plan 2019-21, which includes an outcome around children with additional needs (Outcome 6). Areas of joint commissioning around SEND include Autism pathways and pre / post diagnosis support, care at home dynamic purchasing system (DPS), complex care DPS starting from age 16+, the Emotionally Healthy Child Programme, speech and language and Occupational Therapy.

Work is also being undertaken to re-commission the Cheshire East 0-19 service, which includes services such as health visiting. There has been extensive engagement with a wide range of professionals, parents and young people as part of this commissioning work and this is expected to go live in October 2020.

## 4.2. SEN Support

In Cheshire East, the majority of children and young people's special educational needs are met within First Concerns and SEN Support in mainstream provision, with a small proportion requiring specialist level services.

Cheshire East has followed national, regional and statistical neighbour trends in the number of pupils accessing SEN Support over recent years, with the exception of the last year when we have seen a fall in the rate of SEN Support pupils at a time when all our comparator groups saw a rise. This coincided with the introduction of our SEND Toolkit in November 2017. The toolkit aims to ensure that there is a consistent approach to children and young people's needs being met and is designed to provide cohesive provision from 0 to 25 years. This has been well received by schools and settings in supporting them earlier in the process, and has been documented in a national publication and recognised at national SEND events. 4,552 children and young people are currently receiving SEN Support in Cheshire East schools.

We have worked with schools and other settings to improve our data on the number of pupils receiving SEN Support to ensure that we are consistently and accurately capturing the number of children and young people we support. As a result, it is anticipated that the recorded SEN support numbers will steadily increase in Cheshire East.

We know that the educational outcomes for children and young people on SEN Support are not as strong as for those with EHC Plans but there are positive signs that improvements are being made. The 2018-19 performance data shows the following positive headlines for SEN Support:

- At Early Years, there has been an increase in the number of SEN pupils achieving a Good Level of Development by 1ppt from the previous year (21.9% to 23.2%).
- At phonics, there has been an increase in the number of SEN pupils achieving the Year 1 expected standard by 2 ppts (48% - 50%). This is also 2ppts above the national rate.
- Whilst there is still some progress needed to achieve outcomes which are in line with national performance in several indicators at Key Stage 2, there are some positive improvement trends over the last three years. These include (all at expected level):
  - a. Reading, Writing and maths combined: 6 ppts increase.
  - b. Maths: 9 ppt increase.
  - c. Writing: 10 ppt.
  - d. Reading: 7 ppt.

The Council's Inclusion Quality Team is comprised of a number of local seconded SENCOs and provides support to educational settings around inclusion and supporting children and young people with SEND at all levels of need. During the last academic year, the team visited local educational settings to carry out Inclusion Quality reviews and to ensure settings are following and implementing the SEND Toolkit effectively.

### **4.3. Quality and impact of Education, Health and Care assessments and plans**

As of November 2019, 2457 Cheshire East children and young people have an EHC Plan. The number of EHC Plans continues to rise; there was a 27.6% increase in the number of young people with statements or EHC plans between 2015 and 2019 and the number issued with each calendar year has risen dramatically from 295 EHC Plans issued in 2018 to more than 500 issued to date (17/12/2019) in 2019. We have had more requests for assessments and refused fewer requests. There continues to be a significant number of new cases for children aged under 5, meaning we are identifying and meeting children's needs at an earlier age.

**Just to let you know the team had a compliment this week from a [parent] regarding her son [x]. She wanted to thank everyone for the support he has received as she said that he could not have got where he is today without it. He is now hopefully going on to study nursing.**

Parent carer

Despite the increase in plans, we have significantly improved on the timeliness of our EHC plans this year (detail included in WSOA section above).

Although timeliness has improved, we know that we need to make significant improvements in the quality of our EHC plans and this is a current focus area for our partnership. We need to improve the systems across agencies to focus on improving the quality of practice and our understanding through audits, more multi-agency performance information, surveys for parents and carers and better information on outcomes. We aim to improve parent/carers satisfaction of the EHC process.

We have a good range of support services for children with SEND including our Autism Team, Sensory Inclusion Service, short breaks and therapy services. A SALT and OT started in January 2019 to provide additional speech and language therapy (SALT) support for children with autism and also to children and families at the early years stage. The second element of the pilot is the employment of an occupational therapist (OT) to focus on sensory processing. The OT is initially working with primary aged children with a diagnosis of autism, or on the diagnostic pathway. They are working closely with schools across Cheshire East to provide a series of training packages, focused around sensory processing difficulties.'

**"I just wanted to thank you for inviting me to the SEND Defining... Excellence event last week. I thought it was a really well organised and useful event with so much expertise in the room. The people on my table had some really good ideas and all actively contributed. The exercises were useful and easy to follow...I just wanted to say that it made me feel valued as a member of staff that you invested in this day for us."**

Children who have EHCPs experience good outcomes; these children experience education outcomes above national average. At almost all indicators in Early Years, Key Stage 1 and 2, performance for learners with EHC plans continued to be exceptional. Every key indicator at Key stage 1 and 2 is above national as well as for phonics. To illustrate this very positive performance, SEN learners in reading, writing and maths combined achieved 5 ppts above national at expected level. This profile for SEN learners with EHC plans highlights the strong commitment and skilled workforce within schools to best meet the needs of our more complex SEN learners.

We have low levels of SEND not in education, employment and training (NEET) for 16/17 year olds compared to national figures (as of June 2019, 5.9% of Cheshire East year 12 and 13 young people with SEND were NEET, compared to 7.2% across England and 9.7% across the North West). We have a wide range of employment initiatives and support for young adults leading to a good proportion of those with learning difficulties in paid employment compared to statistical neighbours and national data. Our Emotionally Healthy Child Programme initiative is making good progress in meeting the needs of young people with mental health issues and our youth justice service is effective in meeting the needs of young people with SEND by preventing them going into custody.



**"I feel compelled to write to you [to] thank you so much for the tremendous service we as a family have received from Cheshire East Council."**

Parent





## 4.4. Inclusion

Increasing SEND provision within Cheshire East has been a priority for the SEND Partnership over the last few years. We know that there is currently not sufficient SEND provision in Cheshire East to meet need. Approximately 6% of SEND pupils (143) attend an independent special school or non-maintained school. 85% of these pupils (121) are attending a setting outside of Cheshire East. 95 of these pupils (79%) are at secondary age, which reflects our increased need for specialist places at secondary level. This can lead to young people integrated in communities outside of Cheshire East when education finishes and can lead to additional disruption during transition to Adult services.

Following the completion of a SEN Sufficiency Statement and a Three Year SEN Provision Plan, a range of capital projects to deliver additional local SEN places continue to progress well; this includes creating 168 additional places at a variety of existing local settings including a new 48 place provision for 4-16 year olds with social, emotional and mental health needs due to open in September 2020.

We are currently refreshing our SEN Sufficiency Statement to ensure that we are consistently using current, reliable data to inform planning decisions in relation to SEN provision.

**I would also just like to say how supportive and valuable your seconded SENCOs are. Other than at the networking meetings, I have only had contact with [IQ Officer] but she has been extremely helpful to not only me as a covering SENCO but to our school, staff and parents. The support from someone who works in a SENCO role, is always available to give advice, visit and even attend meetings is very much appreciated**

Local school

We want our children and young people to be educated in their local school, where possible. The proportion of children and young people educated in Special Schools or Special Post-16 institutions has fallen in recent years from 41.7% in 2017 down to 38.9% in 2018, with the current proportion (as of December 2019) at 34.0%.

Our Inclusion Quality team works to improve inclusion through support to educational settings, SENCOs, parents and Council colleagues in many ways including help with reviews, support for children, and EHC needs assessment applications, and resolution/support with parents and tutors. Attendance at our SENCO networks has increased from 35 to 143 at recent sessions.

We need to ensure that schools have sufficient funding and skills in place to support children with SEND. An extensive period of consultation has recently been undertaken in relation to a proposed new set of principles and model for the allocation of high needs top-up funding associated with EHC Plans. The consultation included a series of events for school staff, parent carers and partners, as well as online opportunities. A pilot is now underway to test a number of variables of the proposed new model before future steps towards implementation are agreed.

Cheshire East Council is leading the collaborative commissioning of a new North West Purchasing System for SEN school places at independent/non-maintained special schools and Independent Specialist Provision and has led an LA engagement workshop for the 23 North West authorities that could potentially join, market engagement workshop, surveys, engagement with young people with SEND and extensive consultation with parent / carer groups across the North West. The planned go



live date for the purchasing system is April 2020 and 21 of the 23 authorities have expressed their interest in joining the new system.

#### 4.5. The Local Offer

Cheshire East's Local Offer for SEND was co-produced with parent/carers and professionals from a wide variety of agencies across Cheshire East. This is a comprehensive, fully integrated and interactive 0-25 local offer within an online resource covering children's, adults', communities and public health service areas. This means that families can find information in one place.

New information has been added to the local offer following our inspection to ensure that it meets the needs of families in relation to SEND. However, we aim to continue to improve the offer and to increase parental and practitioner knowledge of our Local Offer for SEND, and a review of the look and feel of the wider online resource is currently underway.



#### 4.6. Personal budgets

Historically Cheshire East has had very low numbers of personal budgets associated with EHC Plans and whilst this has increased significantly over the past three years, there were only 28 arrangements in place in 2019 and the majority of these are in relation to children and young people with social care needs.

Personal Health Budgets are being used for Continuing Care and Continuing Healthcare. We are currently exploring options to implement Personal Health Budgets outside of these areas.

A Task and Finish Group is being established to drive improvements around personal budgets. We aim to further develop awareness and uptake of personal budgets and to increase the number of children and young people and their families accessing personal budgets. To achieve this, we plan to develop and publicise further information resources on personal budgets for young people and families, collect case studies where personal budgets have been used successfully for young people with EHC Plans and implement multi-agency training on personal budgets.

#### 4.7. Preparing for adulthood

A number of developments have been made in relation to Preparing for Adulthood (PfA), including:

- holding a SEND options event entitled 'Planning your future' in July 2019. This event was jointly organised, funded and run by parent carers and the local authority and over 30 providers were present ranging from housing, colleges, benefits advice, health providers and social care. The event was really well attended and parents and young people gave excellent feedback; as a result, we are now planning our next event for 2020.
- the creation of a Transition Pack for young people from year 9. The pack can be tailored for each individual young person.

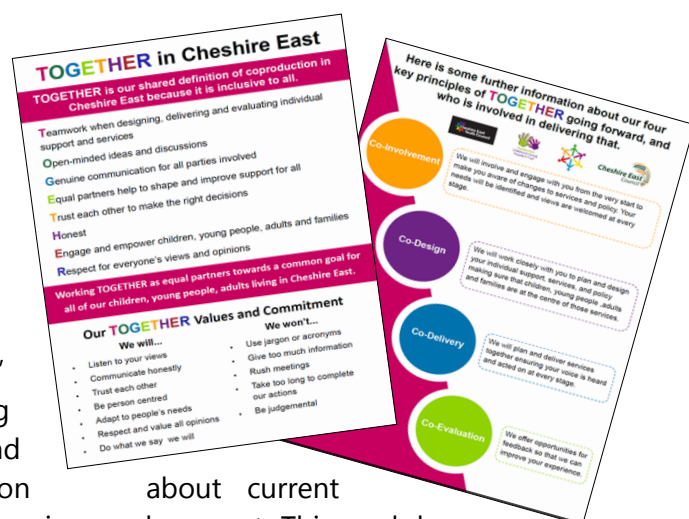
- the introduction of a SEND Ignition programme. This scheme, which is getting national recognition and has received excellent feedback (including from an attending DfE representative), is initially being used with pupils at Park Lane and Springfield Special Schools. We hope to roll out this model where it is appropriate and have recently carried out a Train the Trainer session to facilitate this.
- a significant increase in the number of Supported Internships across a range of local settings. The offer has grown from 2/3 opportunities in 2017 to 36 placed interns as of December 2019. Recently we interviewed students for the new 'Springboard Project'; this is the supported internship that Springfield School launched in September 2019. Every student interviewed was dressed smartly, was punctual and possessed excellent manners. Every young person interviewed stated that they 'want to work', 'they want a job', and 'they want to feel important'. We also have supported internships being delivered from Macclesfield College, Cheshire College, Total People and Pettypool.
- Provider led Supported Accommodation Panels are tailored to meet the housing needs for vulnerable young adults and are helping to shape the market to need.

**A parent carer at the first Ignition meeting for transition planning said "It's been very beneficial today, because it's made me think about the future...what Freddy wants...it's been helpful to really put down on paper your thinking and make a plan".**

Areas we would like to improve includes the number of young people accessing supported internships and more bespoke housing packages for the most complex young people through closer working between Adult and Children's Services, Housing and CCGs. The current Preparing for Adulthood Strategy needs to be strengthened, in particular in its multi-agency approach. A multi-agency workshop was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 in order to refresh the strategy based on pledges from each agency that will in turn set priority actions to deliver effective preparing for adulthood.

## 4.8. Participation/co-production

In Cheshire East we have carried out a significant amount of work to further involve and capture the voice of young people with SEND, led by our SEND Participation Officer. We have continued to work with young people, parent carers and professionals to co-produce a shared definition of co-production in Cheshire East called 'TOGETHER'. A suite of materials have been produced to explain our 'TOGETHER' concept, including a definition leaflet, a video of young people outlining what co-production means to them and webpages where people can find out more information opportunities to work 'TOGETHER' to further develop services and support. 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.



about current

Our SEND Youth Forum is a group that any child or young person with additional needs can attend from the age of 11. Children and young people have the opportunity to have their say and make positive changes about services that affect their lives. They are also able to make new friends, take

part in fun activities and work closely with professionals.

Specific groups run in Macclesfield and Crewe twice a month and children and young people in these groups have been very involved in helping us to develop our plans.

**I really enjoyed the co-production meeting as I felt listened to and for once my views and my own experience were valued and I wasn't put down...I like having a role in the way things work because ultimately it is focused on the child, young person or adult not the professionals or parents. We know best and for once I really felt connected and that the council do want to make a difference and do want myself and others like me to get *our voices heard and learn from us***

Recent examples of doing things TOGETHER include:

- 3 young people from our SEND Youth Forum made their voice heard at a national level by attending a national 'Making Participation Work' Conference. Local young people with SEND also attended the regional 'Youthforia Residential' and worked with other Youth Councils to develop regional campaigns, have their say and influence decision makers. One Cheshire East young person with SEND was shortlisted for the 'Outstanding Achievement' award against candidates from 23 other LA Youth Councils.
- Young people worked with local authority officers and parent carers to plan the 'Preparing for your future' event for young people and parent carers in July 2019.
- A calendar of engagement events and feedback surveys on different topics has been created to ensure that young people and their parent carers have regular opportunities to contribute their feedback and ideas on different areas. Young people have worked with Participation Officers to develop the content and format of surveys.
- The CCGs recently met with a group of young people with Autism from a local High School to have a discussion about their experiences of services and how they feel supported by school and other professionals. Overall it was a very positive discussion and as a result one of the young people is now becoming involved in the SEND Youth Forum.



**"I meant to say the other day. It was impressive to watch [X] sharing the good SEND work at our regional event last week. Other LAs were really taking notice of the good participation work in Cheshire East. It was great to see how its grown."**

In addition to continued improvements to co-production at a strategic level, we have re-introduced consistent co-production meetings from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 within all new EHC needs assessments and renamed them as 'Working TOGETHER' meetings (as described above in section 2.4).

We have also established a refreshed multi-agency SEND Communication and Engagement group, and prepared a SEND Communication and Engagement strategy in order to co-ordinate, oversee

and drive improvements in the quality of engagement between all stakeholders. This group is currently looking into a number of innovative ideas around multi-agency engagement (particularly with parent carers) including online engagement platforms and multi-agency 'surgery' sessions.

## 4.9. Workforce development

A significant restructure of our SEND Service is currently underway (as described in the WSOA section above). This will result in a more place based locality model of working. A detailed induction/refresher schedule is being planned for all members of the service.

Current development opportunities include an allocated half day each week for development time for all key workers and staff. Through this, we address a number of themes around the quality of practice. We are currently looking at rolling out motivational interviewing training across all staff within the Council's education services.

Since our local area SEND inspection, a number of key staff have attended training run by the Council for Disabled Children to improve the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans. In-house training has also taken place around our 10 non-negotiables which all EHC plans have to be checked against. These include a description of social needs, a photo where appropriate and a golden thread to run through the plans of strengths, areas for development and aspirations. This will enable key workers to quality assure their own EHC plans, and peer-review one another's drafted EHC Plans.

This year our Inclusion Quality team have been supporting SENCOs on the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) NASENCO programme. The programme aims to develop the knowledge and skills of SENCOs to become leaders for special educational needs and disability (SEND) in school and gain the confidence to increase the participation and achievement for children and young people with SEND.

Our ambition is to have a multi-agency workforce development plan across all sectors.

**[x] has been to their unit in Nantwich for a couple of visits and so far so good 😊 Thank you very much for sorting this out - I can't tell you what a relief it is to find a school that understands [x]'s difficulties and is so supportive. I'm feeling very optimistic that this will be the start of many positive changes for [x]. Thanks again**

Parent carer

