

SEND

Review Action Plan

September 2021

This Action Plan is being implemented by the SEND team at Suffolk County Council following an independent review into some aspects of SEND provision by a team from Lincolnshire, including Lincolnshire County Council and the parent carer network. This action plan is based on the nine recommendations made by the review team.

| Recommendation No: | Recommendation | The plan we are starting with and will develop with parents / carers |
|--------------------|--|--|
| 1 | <p>Identify a strategic partner to support, at pace, a review of the current case management arrangement for children and young people subject to statutory SEND processes to make sure that there is the capacity and knowledge to ensure co-production during every stage of the EHC process.</p> | <p>We recognise that identifying and achieving the best outcomes for children and families requires co-production at every stage of the journey.</p> <p>To achieve this we want to work with parents and carers to consider how we improve all our interactions, through a case management approach that focuses on strengths, relationships and long-term aspirations for children with SEND.</p> <p>We have appointed a strategic partner to bring pace, capacity and skills in this area. The first priority will be to engage with parents to jointly agree how we best review the current case management arrangements, and the improvements we want to see.</p> <p>Actions we will take include: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The strategic partner will begin working with us from 20th September, with an integrated delivery plan created with parents and partners for the changes we want to make ▪ The review of our case management arrangements will start this half-term and set out clearly how we will change the capacity and knowledge to ensure co-production at every stage. Importantly, we will also aim to start to action the agreed changes this term to show impact, seeking feedback from parents and young people to ensure the changes are working, and ▪ We will also review our SENDCo advice line to ensure it is maximising the impact it can have in supporting SENDCOs and implement any changes necessary. |
| 2 | <p>Complete a training needs analysis, with Family Services' officers, to identify gaps in knowledge and skills; develop appropriate training to ensure that all practitioners and managers are fully conversant with process, procedure, SEND legislation and Person-Centred Planning and that practice is consistent across the county</p> | <p>In ensuring the right training and skills are in place for our family services officers, we will first agree the model of practice (the way of working) for our teams. This will be co-developed with stakeholders building on case management review.</p> <p>Key components of the skills we want to embed with our teams are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular, timely, clear communication with, and feedback to, families • Person centred planning that ensures that young people and families can actively participate in plans and decisions that will affect them • Strength based approaches – working with families to identify how we will maximise the independence of children and young people with SEND to give them the best opportunities throughout their education and into adulthood, and • Modelling the 'Ideal Worker' that our Young People's Network have created. |

| | | |
|------------------|--|---|
| <p>2</p> | <p>Complete a training needs analysis, with Family Services' officers, to identify gaps in knowledge and skills; develop appropriate training to ensure that all practitioners and managers are fully conversant with process, procedure, SEND legislation and Person-Centred Planning and that practice is consistent across the county</p> | <p>Actions we will take, all starting this term, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will co-develop the model of practice for our teams, with key stakeholders through dedicated design workshops • We will co-create the tools required to implement the new practice model • As part of this, we will be develop and trial a clearer way of assessing needs of children with SEND, based on strengths and pilot this with our strategic partner through the Autumn term. • We will complete a training and skills analysis that identifies gaps in knowledge around SEND legislation and guidance as well as confidence levels in having strength based discussions with families and partners, and • Refreshed training on SEND procedures for appropriate staff will commence this term. |
| <p>3.</p> | <p>Critically analyse current operational practice against the SEND Code of Practice and primary legislation (Children and Families Act 2014) to ensure the integrity of the local authority's compliance with statutory duties</p> | <p>We will analyse current and future procedures and processes to ensure these follow the Code of Practice and are clearly defined for staff and for partners and parents. Once updated, we will incorporate these into a learning and development programme.</p> <p>As an important part of this, we will review when and how decisions are made, and how compliance with statutory duties is assured, throughout the process. To re-build trust and confidence, this review and the changes that follow, will be co-produced with parents.</p> <p>Actions we will take include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collation and (external) review of policy and process documentation, against SEND Code of Practice and primary legislation ▪ (External) observation of operations in practice ▪ Agreement of improvements and actions identified with parents and stakeholders, and ▪ Incorporation of the actions into the training and practice development programme so they are coherent. |
| <p>4.</p> | <p>Senior leaders to check, with the CCGs, the effectiveness of the local protocol for the effective sharing of information which addresses confidentiality, consent and security of information</p> | <p>We recognise that effective sharing of information is critical to both understanding the full needs and strengths of children with SEND and identifying the support that will best meet them across education, health and care.</p> <p>Whilst we have made progress at a strategic level in confirming information sharing protocols, we recognise this hasn't yet fully translated into practice at the frontline.</p> |

| | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| <p>4.</p> | <p>Senior leaders to check, with the CCGs, the effectiveness of the local protocol for the effective sharing of information which addresses confidentiality, consent and security of information</p> | <p>Actions to be taken here include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review our local information sharing protocols to ensure we have clear and robust processes in place that can be articulated and understood by staff across the SEND system. • These will form part of the integrated learning and development programme we will develop (which will include increasing the understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and applying strength based approaches in practice) • We will meet with our data management team to review current systems to ensure they enable smooth, safe and compliant data sharing – and take actions to overcome any challenges that may exist in our current systems • Our quality assurance processes will include a specific lens of information sharing, so as we review our interactions with partner organisations and parents and carers including assessments, plans and reviews, we will assess the effectiveness of information sharing and share the outcomes of this |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Establish a robust means of tracking and reporting on <u>all</u> Annual Reviews; develop appropriate processes that support proactive engagement with settings to ensure both that Annual Reviews are held and paperwork is submitted to the local authority within timescales</p> | <p>We recognise that reviews are critically important points in assessing the impact of support for children with SEND, ensuring the right outcomes and aspirations are set for the future, with the right provision and support to meet them.</p> <p>We will be trialling, with our strategic partner, a new approach to understanding need and provision, which we will test and develop with parents. This will focus on ensuring we have a clearer understanding of progress for reviews and are adapting the support and provision that is required.</p> <p>Other actions to ensure reviews are undertaken and tracked include: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will track the completion of Annual reviews for all children and young people with EHCPs • We are currently trialling a new ‘Annual Review Portal’ which will help ensure all schools know which reviews are due and when. The portal will allow safe submission of paperwork and the Local Authority to monitor and report on timescales • The trial will take place through the Autumn term to be fully rolled out through 2022, and • In the Autumn term, we will ensure ‘annual reviews’ is a key agenda at our SENDCo networks, alongside other improvement priorities, including the new approach to understanding and measuring childrens needs that we will be trialling. |

| | | |
|------------------|--|---|
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Establish a mechanism to ensure that all Phase Transfers are identified; actively tracked and completed within the relevant legal timescales for both children of statutory school age and Post-16 learners.</p> | <p>We will put a strong focus on ensuring that EHC plans are reviewed and amended in good time prior to moves between key phases of education - by 15 February at the latest, or 31 March for post 16 transfers.</p> <p>Key actions in this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As a subset of the actions in the section above regarding tracking Annual Reviews, we will complete a full check and validation of the list of children and young people who require a review of their EHC plans in preparation for Phase Transfer ▪ We will ensure this list is distributed to all headteachers and principals of schools, colleges and other institutions attended by children or young people with EHC plans ▪ We will ensure effective communication with those headteachers and principals who have children where transfers are due to take place, through Specialist Education Staff, to confirm the lists and timescales for the submission of the Annual Review paperwork ▪ Advance communication with all parents / carers of children with plans requiring Phase Transfer, and scheduling of transition planning meetings for Spring and Summer Terms, and ▪ We will provide additional Business Support resource to support administrative processing and to monitor progression. |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>Review the process for securing specialist placements; use co-production as an opportunity to work with families to explore options for provision that will best support their young person and consider a case work approach to consultation</p> | <p>We believe that key to determining the right provision for children and young people is to better understand their level of needs and the ability of provision to meet these. With our strategic partner we will be seeking to trial a new approach to understanding the level of children's needs, in partnership with parents, focusing initially on children who may need more specialist placements.</p> <p>Actions to be taken here include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with parents to review the proposed new approach and how we best use this to support children and families in Suffolk • Use the approach to develop a more rounded picture of children's needs and with our specialist provision to help understand the provision's ability to meet these, to ensure appropriate matching of provision and needs • Ensure families are part of this analysis – developing a shared view on what the child / young person's needs are and how they are best met, and • Developing a plan for how we roll this approach out further to mainstream it in practice across Suffolk, including through the revised Decision Making Panels |

| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| <p>8.</p> | <p>Work with education leaders and parent carers to understand the increasing demand for specialist provision and use both SEND data and local intelligence and demographics to inform sufficiency planning.</p> | <p>We recognise that the high and rising demand for specialist provision is in part a result of a lack of confidence in the system to meet needs.</p> <p>We also recognise that at times we may be missing opportunities to identify and meet need earlier. We intend to implement a multi-agency review of some cases, including with parents, carers and young people, to identify where we could have met need earlier and build this into the support provided as part of our local offer.</p> <p>With the support of our strategic partner, we will also introduce a new way of identifying need and determining the right support and provision – testing the principles and practice throughout with parents / carers and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Based on the learning from the new needs assessment trial, the approach will be rolled out across the whole process and area and will start to provide a richer picture of need, provision to inform sufficiency planning.</p> <p>Over and above the actions in the sections above, this will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the data from the trial to pinpoint the nature and extent of needs which go unmet, across different localities and settings • Aggregating the data on needs from the trial to evidence where provision is insufficient, and • Developing new sufficiency actions based on this evidence. |
| <p>9.</p> | <p>Use the outcomes of complaints, mediations and Tribunals, as well as LGO decisions, to critically analyse processes and decision-making and identify learning to inform future practice for all practitioners involved in the SEND processes</p> | <p>As part of a revised quality assurance process for SEND, we will produce monthly reports that pull out the themes from complaints, mediations, tribunals and LGO decisions.</p> <p>We will ensure that a review of these themes is a key agenda of our Directorate Management Team discussions – including actions needed to ensure these are responded to in practice.</p> <p>We will also ensure these themes are a discussion point of team meetings on a monthly basis, with frontline teams empowered to generate options to ensure such complaints are reduced and mitigated by the right early support.</p> |

9.

Use the outcomes of complaints, mediations and Tribunals, as well as LGO decisions, to critically analyse processes and decision-making and identify learning to inform future practice for all practitioners involved in the SEND processes

We believe that at the heart of reducing complaints is the way we engage and communicate with parents, and we will track the impact of strength based training to all our staff on the volume and themes of complaints.

Actions will include:

- Desktop analysis of complaints, mediations and Tribunals, as well as LGO decisions to identify the common drivers (themes)
- Two workshops, including parents / carers, to review themes and identify and immediate changes that could reduce these challenges.
- Ensure lessons from this analysis of themes is brought into the development of the practice model for our case management teams