

Annex B (i)

Children and Education Select Committee: SEND Task and Finish Group 17 November 2017 2.30pm – 3.30pm, G10

Task Group membership: Mark Brett-Warburton; Chris Townsend; Christopher Botten;
Apologies: Tina Mountain; Yvonna Lay

Witnesses: Mary Lewis, Cabinet Member for Education
Mary Burguieres, Continuous Improvement & Change Strategic Lead, Schools and Learning

Purpose: To follow and monitor the required improvements for Surrey's SEND Services, in line with the conditions set out in the Written Statement of Action.

Agenda:

- Governance - What oversight is maintained on progress?
- Data - What data do we capture, and what is it telling us?
- Impact - What have we done in response to what we know?

Minutes:

There had been positive progress on delivering the SEND improvements. A new Quality Assurance post had been created in order to improve the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and this was reducing the amount of demand created by poor quality EHCPs having to be rewritten.

The Task Group reviewed the dashboard -

Measure 1: New EHCP requests on time (cumulative 12 month)

It was noted that the cumulative basis of EHCP completed on time was a Department for Education (DfE) measure that allowed national benchmarking. In October Surrey was performing in line with the national average (58%) and above the target it had agreed with the DfE (55%). The national target was 90%, though it was recognised that few local authorities were currently performing well against this.

Measure 2: New EHCP requests on time (due in month)

The Task Group was informed that this was intended to measure productivity in month. It was commented that this was a percentage set against volume, and needed to be read in conjunction with the other measures in order to understand overall demand. Witnesses commented that productivity had plateaued at 60%, which was considered low, and work had been conducted over the autumn to identify the reasons why.

It was highlighted that the analysis had suggested the timeliness of advice from the required partners in health and social care was an issue, as well as the quality of the input. The Task Group was informed that the SEND Improvement Board had endorsed a recovery plan that would see additional resource in health. Work had also been undertaken with social workers, it had been identified that there was some confusion as to what constituted advice in the context of EHCP, and this was being addressed.

Measure 3: EHCPs in excess of 5 weeks over 20 week target

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The Task Group discussed the EHCP backlog, and was informed that the target was to reduce this to 5 by December 2017. It was noted that this was not on track, though it had reduced to 49 in October 2017.

The Task Group was informed that the North East area was experiencing highest demand in respect to overdue EHCPs. The Cabinet Member had visited the team and reflected that there were no immediately apparent management issues. It was highlighted that there was a continued focus on how to improve processes and support the team. The Task Group was informed that one stage of EHCP completion was parental agreement, and that the complexity of individual cases was often the root cause of delays.

The Task Group queried the role of health partners, and asked whether there was a case for seconding health staff under a Section 75 agreement. It was noted that there were joint appointments related to commissioning, though the option of pooled budgets had not been pursued. It was suggested by Members that this was related to the deficit financial position of many Surrey NHS organisations, and that it could be piloted to assess whether it would deliver more timely EHCP completion. The Cabinet Member agreed to explore this and report back at the next Task Group meeting.

There was a discussion on the role of residential placements, and the need to develop new provision to address complex needs within Surrey. This remained a key area of focus for the service. It was also commented by the Task Group that there seemed to be two issues emerging from discussions, one was the requirement to deliver the improvements set out in the Written Statement of Action, and the other was to address the structural issues that led to failure demand, such as the timeliness of advice.

Measure 4: Transfers from Statement to EHCP (2017/18 academic year)

The Task Group was informed that there was a national deadline to transfer all Statements to EHCPs by 31 March 2018. It was noted that there was a dedicated transfer team in place to meet this deadline, and once this had been completed the resource could be reallocated to meet demand elsewhere.

The Task Group was informed that a transfer required family and partner co-operation, and it was highlighted that the Council was encouraging schools to support the delivery of all transfers to deadline. Witnesses also commented that post-16 transfers were proving challenging as Further Education colleges were adapting to the change in requirements following the 2014 legislation and subsequent codes of practice.

For the next meeting:

- Cabinet Member to update on health and budget pooling discussions. (ML)
- A breakdown of cases in measure 3, showing outliers, reasons for delay and remedial action taken (MB)
- Update on progress to meet March 2018 transfer deadline (MB)
- Demonstration of data using Tableau (MB)

Next meeting: TBC (January/February 2018)