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To: The Chair and Members of the Children's  
Scrutiny Committee

County Hall  
Topsham Road  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX2 4QD

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Date: 15 January 2021

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### **CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Monday, 25th January, 2021

A virtual meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Committee is to be held on the above date at 2.15pm to consider the matters below. For the joining instructions, please contact the Clerk for further details on attendance and/or public participation.

Phil Norrey  
Chief Executive

## **A G E N D A**

### **PART I - OPEN COMMITTEE**

1 Apologies

2 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

Items which in the opinion of the Chair should be considered at the meeting as matters of urgency.

3 Public Participation

Members of the public may make representations/presentations on any substantive matter listed in the published agenda for this meeting, as set out hereunder, relating to a specific matter or an examination of services or facilities provided or to be provided.

### **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION OR REVIEW**

4 Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

In accordance with previous practice, Scrutiny Committees are requested to review the list of forthcoming business and determine which items are to be included in the [Work Programme](#).

The Committee may also wish to review the content of the [Cabinet Forward Plan](#) and the Children's Services [Risk Register](#) to see if there are any specific items therein it might wish to explore further.

5 SEND Improvement (Pages 1 - 22)

Report of the Head of Education and Learning, CS/21/01, attached.

A full written report on the actions taken to deliver the Local Area SEND Written Statement of Action and progress since the report was published in January 2019.

6 Domestic Violence and Abuse and Early Help (Pages 23 - 28)

Report of the Head of Public Health Nursing (CS/21/02), attached.

**MATTERS FOR INFORMATION**

7 Youth Offending Service Peer Review (Pages 29 - 32)

Briefing on the Peer Review of Devon Youth Offending Service by Essex Youth Offending Service, attached

8 Children's Standing Overview Group (Pages 33 - 38)

Notes from the December Standing Overview Group, attached.

9 Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Joint Scrutiny Group (Pages 39 - 42)

Report of the Chair of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group, attached.

10 Information Previously Circulated

Below is a list of information previously circulated to Members, since the last meeting, relating to topical developments which have been or are currently being considered by this Scrutiny Committee.

- Letter from Vicky Ford MP in response to Eleanor Brazil's report to the DfE on Children's Services in Devon (9/11/20).

[Briefing notes](#)

**PART II - ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

None

*Members are reminded that Part II Reports contain exempt information and should therefore be treated accordingly. They should not be disclosed or passed on to any other person(s). They need to be disposed of carefully and should be returned to the Democratic Services Officer at the conclusion of the meeting for disposal.*

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### **Induction Loop available**





## **SEND Written Statement of Action Full Progress Update Report of the Head of Education & Learning**

This update aims to demonstrate the actions we have taken and progress we have made in implementing our Written Statement of Action (WSOA) following the SEND review in January 2019.

- It provides a summary of our progress against the 4 areas of improvement identified in the SEND Review. The detailed action plan and impact measures are also provided [on the DCC website](#).
- It should be noted that this work sits alongside the work of the SEND Improvement Broad which addresses the broader picture of SEND in Devon, including how we have been working during the pandemic.

### **Background**

Between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> December 2018, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area, to judge the effectiveness of Devon's approach to implementing the special educational needs and disability (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The specific focus was on how the local area identifies the aspirations and needs of children and young people with SEND, meets those needs, and improves their education, health and care outcomes.

As a result of the findings of this inspection, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a Written Statement of Action was required to address **four** areas of weakness in the local area's practice.

The four areas of weakness in the local area's practice are outlined below.

- A.** Strategic plans and the local area's SEND arrangements are not embedded or widely understood by stakeholders including schools, settings, staff and parents and carers;
- B.** The significant concerns that were reported about communication with key stakeholders, particularly with parents and families;
- C.** The time it takes to issue Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and the variable quality of these plans. Plans do not consistently capture a child and young person's needs and aspirations so that they are a valuable tool to support the planning and implementation of education, health and care provision to lead to better lived experiences for the child and their families;
- D.** Weaknesses in the identification, assessment, diagnosis and support of those children and young people with autism spectrum disorder.

Devon County Council and NHS Devon CCG are jointly responsible for submitting and delivering the Written Statement of Action.

While the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) focused on addressing these four areas of significant concern the **wider SEND Implementation Plan remained in place** and continued to focus on delivering the priorities in the Devon SEND Strategy

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2017-2020 (as well as all other areas for development picked up by the Local Area SEND Inspection). The Champions for Change “Listen, Hear, Understand” project continued to ensure that our children and young people had a stronger voice.

## **Part 1. Progress against the Written Statement of Action**

The black text in section identifies actions we have taken while the [blue text](#) shows the impact and resulting follow up actions

- A.** Section A – Ofsted said - Strategic plans and the local area’s SEND arrangements were not embedded or widely understood by stakeholders including schools, settings, staff and parents and carers;

### **1) Embedding Strategic plans**

We said we would improve access to and the helpfulness of our information, so we have.

- Enabled users to opt into updates from the local offer website
- Produced a short clear online guide to the SEND Strategy and published it on the local offer
- Published key information about SEND in a clear and transparent way; this has been based on what parents have told us they want to know
- Ensured readability on all published documents. Ongoing spot-checks will ensure continued good practice.
- Published advice for parents new to SEND which has been co-produced with the support from DIAS (Devon Information and Advice Service) and Parent Carer Forum Devon.
- Published a ‘Who does what?’ guide for parents and stakeholders so that parents and young people understand who does what and whose job it is to communicate what to who.
- Offer workshops and/or webinars for parents to help explain/answer questions on how our SEN system works and how they can get help
- Produced a monthly newsletter which users can subscribe to. This promotes events, training, information and provides updates on our progress.

### **Impact and future actions**

We set ourselves a target of 60,000 Local Offer webpage hits and this target was achieved showing users were accessing the information. By November 2019 58% of parent responses reported that the information was useful. 41% also reported that the information was easy or very easy to find. While this feedback met the original target it also indicated improvements were still needed so a significant piece of work was commissioned to redesign the website, including all navigation, in full consultation with users. The revised website is currently being tested and will launch by the end of Jan 2021.

To support the sharing of information during Covid 19 additional webpages specifically focused on SEND support along with provider updates have been put in place on the [DCC website](#) and on the [DIAS Webpages](#).



In addition to the improved engagement with the website we secured a 117% increase in take up to the SEND newsletter. In addition, the newsletter is now cascaded widely across the partnership and therefore has a wider audience than this percentage represents.

We will continue to monitor and secure feedback from families on the changes and make further improvements as needed. Wider engagement with parents through the Parent Carer Forum, as shown in section B, will help ensure our information is as accessible as possible.

## 2) Staff understanding

We said practitioners working in health, education and care, and other stakeholders would better understand the principles of the SEND Code of Practice, our strategic plans to deliver them and the part they each play in delivering them. So, we have

- Rolled out induction training to 6500 staff working with children across the partnership; this number grows daily.
- Included SEND training in the Early Help roadshows targeting another 250 professionals
- Provided face to face bespoke training for over 300 other staff focusing on key areas of practice in education, health and care.
- As part of our STP wide speech and language workstream, a SEND conference and roadshows were organised to focus on autism and speech, language communication skills. This was supported by National Association of Special Educational Needs ([NASEN](#)). As part of a raising awareness for the National SLCN campaign in October 200+ people who work directly with children took part in speech language and communications training. The courses were over-subscribed and further sessions are planned. These sessions were on top of our wider speech and language work with partners and build on the Enhanced Language training Programme.
- SEND Champions are now in role in most services in order to promote understanding and application of the SEND Code of Practice.
- All decision-making staff have received training and the legal requirements they are working within.

### Impact and follow up actions

This induction training has been [recognised as good practice by NASEN and is now being rolled out nationally](#). The module 2 professional's training has similarly been recognised and this will be promoted nationally as a traded product. Parents have said that professionals working with children are able to provide more helpful advice than previously experienced. We fully accept that there is still more work to do in this area to embed practice across the partnership but are pleased that the training has been successfully rolled out even with the pressures Covid 19 has presented.

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The training for decision makers has ensured decisions are firmly rooted in the SEND Code of Practice at each stage of the process.

A base line survey was conducted following the inspection and a follow up survey was planned to evidence progress in relation to staff members own view of their knowledge. This survey has been delayed due to Covid 19 but will be run later in the year.

### **3) The New SEND Strategy**

Devon's [SEND Strategy 2017-20](#), was co-produced with parents and carers, set out the local area's vision, and priorities to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families. The SEND Inspection identified that the strategy had clear aims to improve the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND but while fit for purpose, practice was not embedded.

**We said that Devon's strategy on how we support children with SEN and their families would be easy to find and to understand.**

### **Impact and follow up actions**

A new SEND Strategy 2021-2024 will be launched in January 2021.

The Vision and Strategy Workstream held a Visioning Workshop in July 2020, to identify the key things that children and young people with SEND and their families wanted now and in the future.

It was well attended by parent carers, professionals from all services involved in the SEND Transformation (The Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS providers, SEND 0-25, Babcock, Disabled Children's Service, Adult Social Care, Children's Services Commissioning, Participation Team, Children's Social Care, Public Health Nursing, Devon County Council Communications, mainstream and special schools, Early Help, Public Health and DIAS).

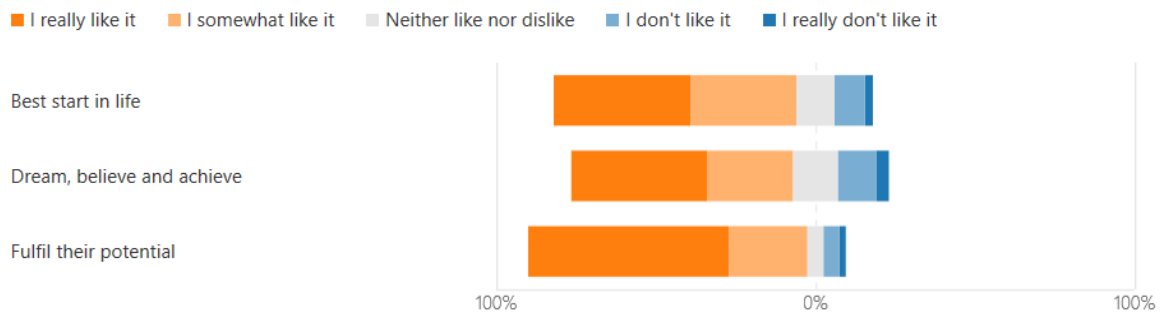
Advocates for children and young people with SEND, parent carer representatives and service leads set the context for the workshop, with feedback on the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND in Devon.

The feedback from the workshop on the key things that children and young people with SEND and their families wanted now and in the future was used to develop four proposals for a vision. Members of the Vision and Strategy workstream consulted with their networks to identify which of the four proposals were preferred, and a merger of two was the favoured option.

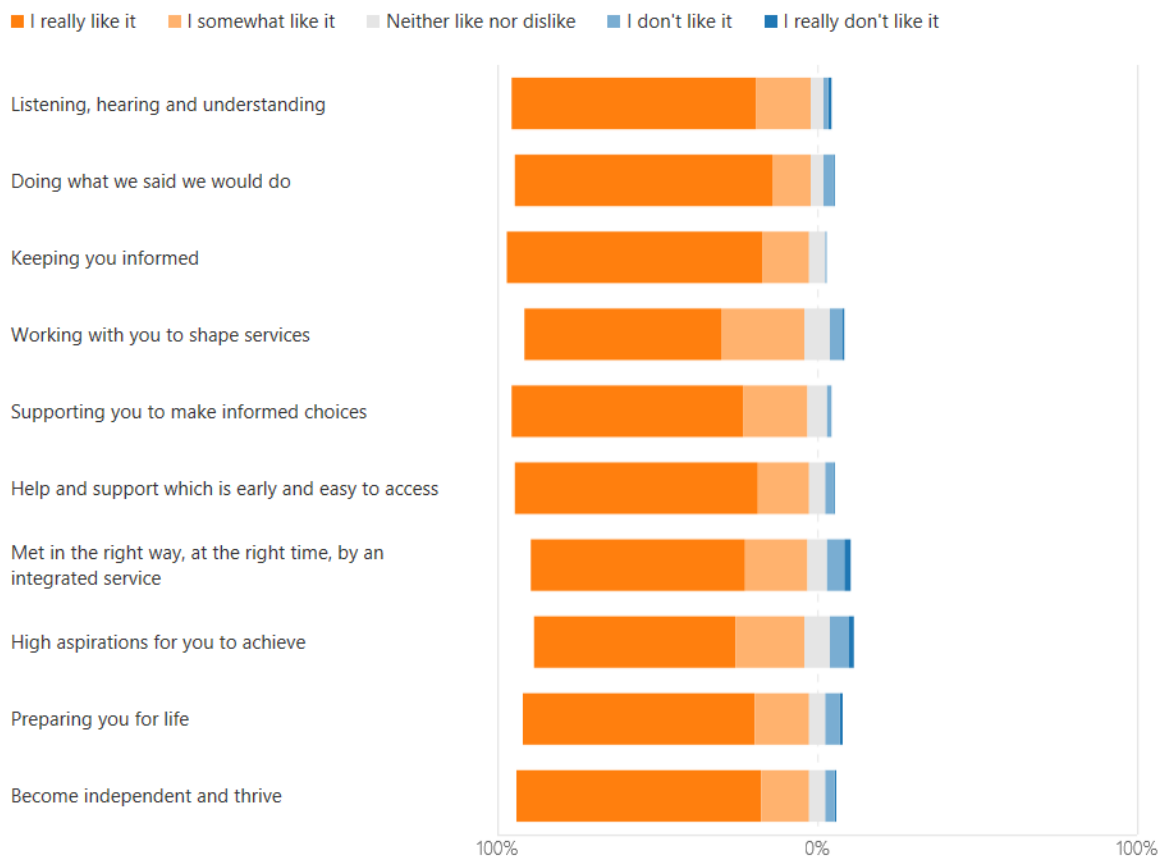
In October and November this revised draft vision was then included in the wider consultation with children and young people with SEND, parent carers and professionals.

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The consultation feedback on the vision and priorities was very positive with the majority saying they either really liked or somewhat liked the statements in the vision; the vision was revised following this feedback, to remove the term 'best start in life' because of the views expressed by young people.



The majority either really liked or somewhat liked the priorities, so these were retained:



The new vision and strategy will be signed off by the SEND Transformation Steering Group and the SEND Improvement Board on 19 and 21 January 2021. The Operational Delivery Group will then begin work to develop a SMART action plan to deliver the vision and priorities, which will sit alongside the strategy.

The SEND Transformation Communications and Engagement Workstream will create a video to communicate the strategy to children and young people with SEND and engage with them on our vision to enable them to 'dream, believe and achieve and fulfil their potential'. This will form part of a broader communication and engagement

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plan (see section B), which includes a video for parent carers, social media posts, and resources for professionals. The final strategy will be put onto the Local Offer website.

Feedback from the consultation on the SEND strategy about the accessibility of SEND services will be used to inform the design of SEND services.

## **4) Changing the lived experience - SEND Transformation programme**

We said that we would improve parents and young peoples lived experience of SEN support in Devon by designing and implementing an integrated service that works together, and with families, to ensure young people receive the right support at the right time.

### **We plan to deliver this commitment through our SEND transformation programme**

This project was planned in 3 phases.

- The first phase was to understand the issues with the current system and put forward proposals for a complete redesign that brings together services in a way which would deliver the ambition above.
- The second phase was to agree the action plan and put in place the partnership wide workstreams that would implement the agreed new design.
- Phase 3 will be the wider partnership implementation of the new design.

### **Impact and follow up actions**

This first phase of the process has been completed and an independent report, which was based on feedback from parent carer representatives, and staff in education, health and social care services was produced so that we could better understand how the current service feels for them, how we can improve our SEND offer and the best way to ensure each service area works more collaboratively together.

These valuable insights told us that we have a dedicated staff team as well as committed parents and carers who are all supportive of the development of a streamlined SEND service, enabling a consistent approach to care and support. It also told us that there is widespread agreement amongst families and professionals that the SEND process needs to be integrated across all agencies and partners to ensure children and families only have to tell their story once and feel they are working with one team.

The second phase of the process is underway and will take 18 months to 2 years to implement. The new system will be designed with children and young people at the centre, so they are listened to, heard and are able to be part of the decision-making process. The aim is to ensure that every child has the support they need as early as possible, to prevent the need for more complex care at a later date and to support their transition into adulthood.

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A partnership wide SEND Transformation Steering Group (which includes the co-chairs of the Parent Carer Forum), has been put in place to deliver the transformation programme and the first workstreams; Vision and Strategy Workstream (as detailed in section 3 above), Design Workstream and the Communications and Engagement Workstream are now in operation. Progress has been slowed by the impact of the pandemic, but key milestones are being delivered in line with the revised time scale.

The Service Design Workstream is working with a wide range of stakeholders and partners across Devon and has developed a set of principles which the new service design must meet in order to achieve its objectives. The Communications and Engagement Workstream is providing internal and external communications and engaging key stakeholders to support the SEND transformation.

The final phase of the programme will involve extending the integrated SEND system to include preparation for adulthood, health, schools and commissioned service functions to provide a seamless service.

**B: Section B:** Ofsted said we needed to address the significant concerns that were reported about communication with key stakeholders, particularly with parents and families;

## **1) Communication and engagement.**

We said that parent participation would be fully representative, countywide and a co-design culture would be impacting on strategies, services and key decisions. DCC have supported parents to:

- With the help of a host organisation the Parent Carer Forum Devon (PCFD) have been supported to significantly increase their reach and expand their steering group. Parents have a clear plan for the year ahead on areas in which they want to influence change. Parents have impacted throughout 2020 on a number of key developments.
- DIAS have expanded the parent Ambassador programme and there are plans to join this with PCFD in 2021.
- The Young Person led Champions for Change group have expanded representation and have ambitious plans for 2021 to reach more children and young people in mainstream schools.
- During Covid-19 parents, carers and children and young people with SEND have shared their lived experience, as a result we have changed communication, information and the delivery of services.

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## Impact and follow up actions

The Parent Carer Forum Devon (PCFD) has been supported to expand their membership to **300+** parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. While parent groups in each locality have not been able to meet, the PCFD have continued to increase membership through the Covid-19 pandemic with more parents engaging with the forum through digital means (e.g., virtual meetings and a newly established closed Facebook group) and by signing up to receive a regular Forum newsletter which is used to inform parent carers of updates and developments, and also to seek views and consultation.

The Forum now has two co-chairs and has increased the number of parent volunteers on the steering group (now 6) and continued to engage with agencies to identify issues and to shape and influence a number of specific outcomes for families, such as actions on the Autism pathway and ensuring that information provided for families is co-produced to make it accessible and relevant.

The co-chairs and steering group also lead on the engagement with SEND services. Key services and strategies are being co-designed with parent carer engagement this includes:

- the [SEND Transformation programme](#),
- the DCFP's post-COVID Re-set plan,
- support for children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder),
- the 0-25 service EHCP charter;
- Children and Families Health Devon (CFHD) transformation programmes;
- the Disabled Children's service short breaks offer.

Through the Forum parents have told us the areas of service or support that they want to influence. Virtual opportunities to bring together parents with senior leaders have been scheduled to address these priority areas, with significant interest from parents already received for these workshops throughout 2021.

The Parent Carer Forum have [launched a new website](#) which explains their role and also provides helpful information about engagement events, support groups and training. For example parents with children up to the age of 8 can access an increased range of support groups and training in their locality through Early Years, Children's Centre working jointly with the Early Years Complex Needs Service (the service which supports the visually impaired) and virtually with Babcock and Children and Family Health Devon. There are exciting plans in place for 2021 including distributing 100 wellbeing packs to members.

The new Parent Ambassador Volunteer (AV) programme has been successfully launched as a joint project for DIAS and Parent Carer Forum Devon. This has created a network of parent volunteers across the County, which then provides in-person signposting support to other parents, whilst also then hearing and informing



our understanding of the experiences and needs of families. The impact of this for individual parents has been easier navigation and ability to reach services, whilst the thematic experiences and insights gained through the AV parents has then been shared with us by PCFD in their challenge to us to respond and continue to do better for families.

## **2) Young People.**

We said, children and young people would feel listened to and have influenced services and schools through active participation. So, we have

- Secured the resource and put in place a Participation Team to support children and young people's engagement.
- Continue to build relationships, engaged with existing youth groups and focussed support on key areas of need (for example autism support, and youth group service for Deaf children and young people in Exmouth where there is a specialist school).
- Put in place a DCC apprenticeship and intern programme to ensure young people with SEND are part of our workforce and able to give a young person's view on the systems we have in place both strategically and operationally.
- Developed the delivery of our champions for change programme, which has seen an increase in the number of schools represented and the number of young people attending despite all the challenges of 2020 and the inability to physically come together.
- Ensured the views of young people and young adults are heard, represented, and inform the planning of support, including decisions at adult strategic planning forums. Areas for engagement in 2019/20 are employment, housing, health inequalities and co-design of pre and post diagnosis support for people with autism from 14 years upwards. Learning Development Partnership Board activity has been adjusted to provide virtual support through WhatsApp groups, telephone calls and activities.
- With Living Options Devon, we have commissioned work to ask how service users and minority groups are coping with Covid-19 and social isolation, using technology and how well our services are supporting them.
- Engaged with school leaders so that we are better connected to their student voice and are able to bring senior leaders and elected representatives together with young people to hear about local and Countywide experiences. This work has been impacted significantly by Covid-19 although we remain confident that this avenue will be successful when it is permissible, in the meantime virtual meetings are planned.
- Worked with young people during the SEND transformation consultation and put into action their ideas on how to do this better.

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## **Impact and follow up actions.**

Activities for young people with SEND have continued during Covid-19 with the Participation Team promoting active engagement with children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers. The lived experiences of young people through the Covid-19 pandemic were represented at two partnership-wide virtual meetings: one in June and one in October. In June, advocates for children with SEND from two special schools also presented to the Devon Children and Families Partnership Executive meeting on their experiences during lockdown. Their presentations have directly influenced the DCFP reset detailing their priorities for the next 6 months.

Through online opportunities we have established engagement routes with children and young people via online an youth service delivered by [Space](#)\*. This has enabled us to hear from a larger cohort of young people who have SEND. During 2020 we were able to hear from young people about the ways that they would “have their voice heard”, which then informed the development of our SEND Engagement Framework.

A mapping exercise was completed towards the end of last year to understand all of the SEND youth group provision that is available across Devon. Geographically, it was found that Exeter and South Devon are best served by SEND youth clubs, and there is an apparent gap in Mid and North Devon, particularly around Okehampton and Bideford. Further work to investigate this and to hear from young people in those areas will be achieved during 2021.

Despite a period of time where the group were unable to meet (due to Covid and the level of planning and co-ordination needed) we are pleased that the number of special school pupils engaged with the [champions for change](#) programme has doubled. The Champions have told us the different issues that they want to spend their time focussing on during the year ahead, which will then continue to inform and influence services.

Feedback from young people and families who are supported by the Preparation for Adulthood Team has been very positive. *“I would like to say that Alice (PFA Worker) was very professional, sympathetic and thorough. She was a pleasure to talk to from the start and has continued to help me and XXX with her knowledge. She has a special way of explaining things and putting you at ease.”*

## **3) Choice and Control**

We said parents, carers and children would have more choice and control by easy access to information, advice, and support online. To facilitate this work, parent carer reps undertook a review of the Local Offer website organisation at LORG meeting on 17.09.19 to set out the "skeleton" of the Local Offer webpages, to ensure that the arrangement of information makes sense and is accessible for parents.



Feedback from young people at Champions for Change has informed us that they do not / would not access a Local Offer website for information, but that they would much prefer to access information through videos on YouTube. This feedback has been taken into account in the new website design as mentioned in section A. Local Offer links for all neighbouring authorities are also now clearly accessible and visible on Devon's local offer.

## **Section C: Timeliness of Education Health and Care plans.**

Ofsted said we needed to address the time it takes to issue Education Health and Care plans (EHCP) and the variable quality of these plans. They also said plans did not consistently capture a child and young person's needs and aspirations so that they were a valuable tool to support the planning and implementation of education, health and care provision to lead to better lived experiences for the child and their families;

So, we have:

- Reviewed the Education Health and Care (EHC) assessment process to identify delays and time efficiencies.
- Revised EHC assessment workflow processes have been agreed, and timeframe published.
- Put in place monthly reporting to the SEND Operational Delivery Group on the timeliness of professional advice to indicate milestone targets being met.
- Put in place monthly reporting to the SEND Board on the timeliness of draft and final EHC plans.
- Alongside health and care leads, reviewed and updated monitoring and escalation processes to manage delays.
- Published advice and guidance to schools for responding to consultations to ensure timeliness.
- Improved case co-ordination, with a new online management portal which ensures parents and professionals can track progress of the Assessment and Review process and access information in a secure and timely way.
- Put in place a refreshed quality assurance framework and carried out a quality assurance audit to establish a baseline from which our progress/improvement trajectory can be monitored. Reports on quality assurance monitoring are provided to the Operational Delivery Group monthly and quarterly to the SEND Board with an outline of any action/issues.
- Published a charter of what a good EHCP looks like (with examples of effective assessment of needs, outcomes and provision content) developed and agreed.

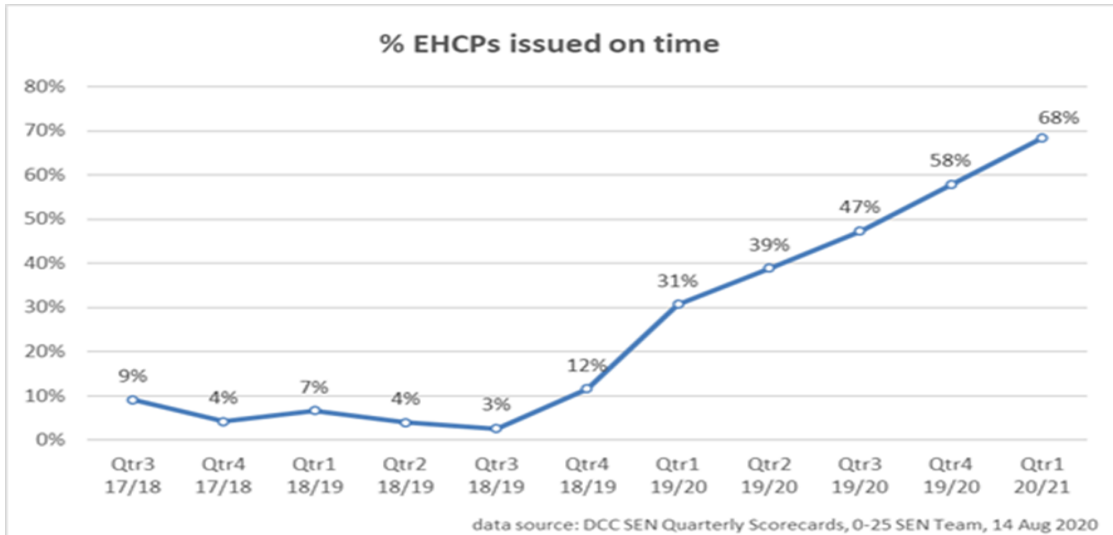
## **Impact and future actions**

At the time of the inspection the timeliness of EHCPs was 4%, by May of 2021 this had improved to 73%; which was above the latest known national average of 61%. However, the impact of Covid-19 had an effect on availability of professionals and

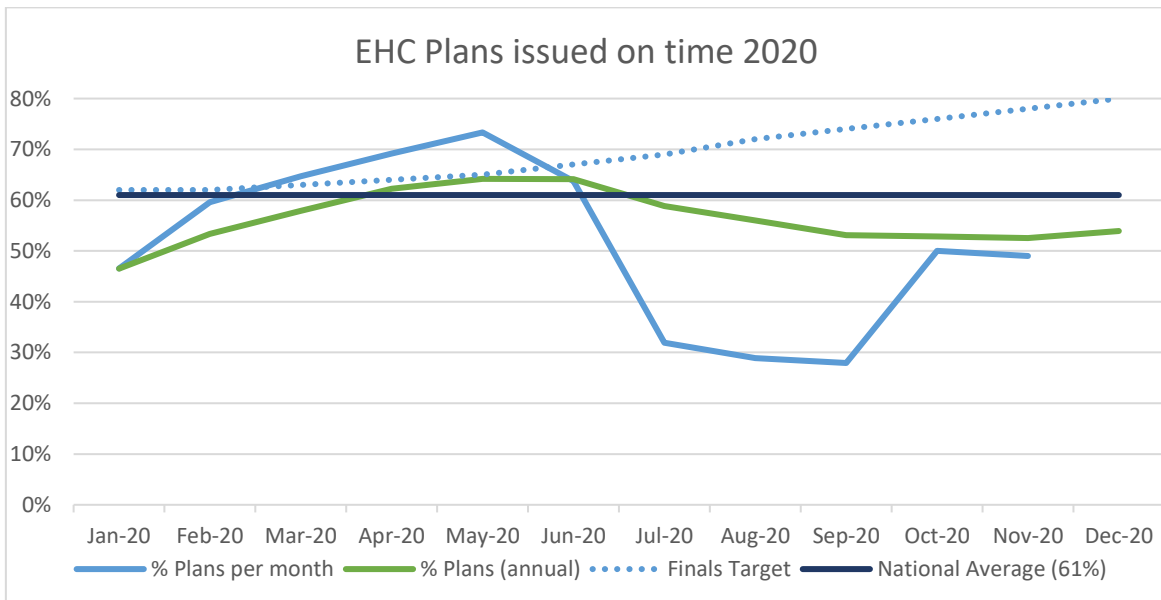
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children to access appointments which affected the necessary contributions to assessments. This showed recovery in September 2020 as schools returned and the annual percentage improved, and we end the year at 51%. It should be noted that this has been achieved at the same level of demand on assessments as was experienced in 2019. That level of demand was not replicated in neighbouring LAs who saw requests dramatically reduce because of Covid-19. The below graphs show the improvement in timeliness over time.

The graph below shows this improvement trajectory from October 2017 to June 2020.



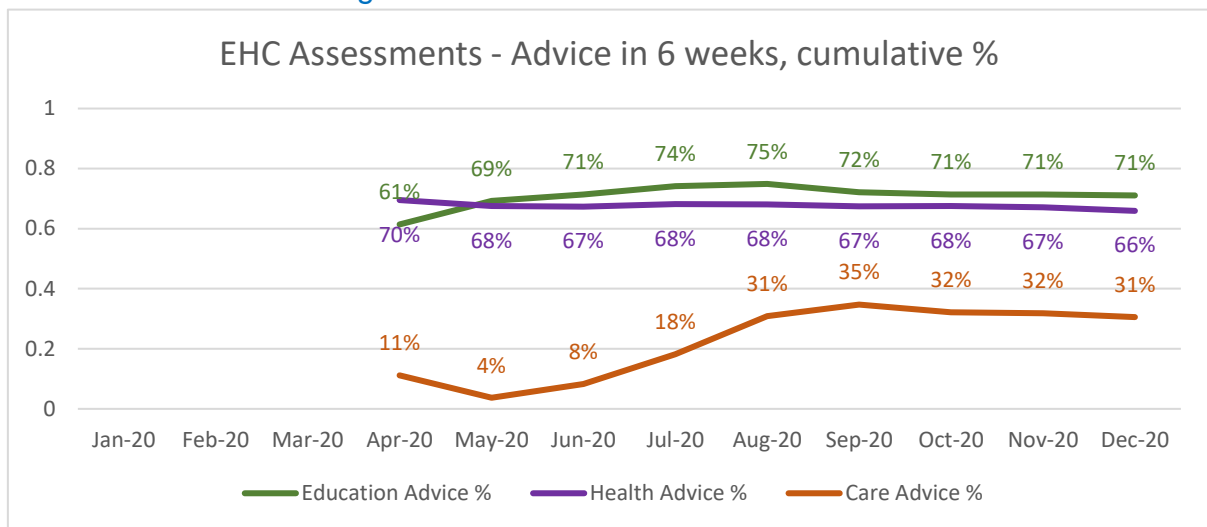
In December 2020 timeliness had recovered from the impact of Covid-19 and the overall timeliness sustained at 53% of plans issued on time. Prior to the latest lockdown timeliness was back on an upward trajectory.



Professional advice targets have not met the targets that were set which were July 2019 of 60%; Sept 19 - 70%; Nov 19 - 80%; Dec 19 - 82%; Jan 20 - 85%; June 20 - 95%. Covid-19 has had an impact on these figures and in the most recent update at the end of Nov, 6 week timeliness was; Education 71%, Health 66%, Care 31%. It is

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anticipated that the latest lockdown will therefore prevent further improvement in overall timeliness. The graph below shows this trend in professional timeliness since the EHCP Hub was brought online.



Parent feedback about assessments this year have shown the positive experience that is now being seen compared to their experiences at the time of Ofsted. There is still work to do in this area but some of the feedback is provided below.

Comments have included:

- When my older son needed an EHCP it took a very long time to go through the process and get him in to a special school. This time, with my younger son, I would not describe it as easy, because this kind of thing is never easy as a parent, but the actual process is easier. Everything is happening on time and the communication is better.
- I have read through xxxxx's EHCP and I am happy that it embodies all areas of his needs at school. It is very thorough and detailed and once implemented; I would hope to see xxxxxx begin a more positive journey as he goes.
- You made me feel so much better. We have been so incredibly let down by everyone for years now and like I said on the phone, we've not yet had any professional actually 'on our side'.
- Thank you very much for the final plan, I feel that it is a robust plan and extra support will enable xxxxx to hopefully grow in confidence and for her to be able to access more opportunity.
- I would like to thank you for the timely way you have dealt with this process from start to finish.

In order to ensure EHCPs were received and used by all professionals to support children and young people we put in place regular SENCO network meetings. Meetings have covered a number of topics such as 'Meet the SEN team', Annual Reviews, Consultation responses from schools, use of a graduated response, input from Health and Education. These have seen regular attendance and positive feedback from school SENCOs.

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A new case management system has been rolled out for all new EHC assessments by schools, healthcare, professionals, local government officers, young people, and parents to improve the quality of assessments. This was put in place from Feb 2020. Parents are able to access the status of their case at any time. There are also regular meetings across different services and professionals to manage the new system and solve issues that arise, this has also been extended to a parent spotlight meeting to address their user issues.

Advice for Annual Review meetings and the process that should be followed has been issued to schools and partners. The reviews started to be added to the EHC Hub in Autumn 2020, which again increases the visibility of the professionals around a child.

An EHCP Charter has also been developed and agreed with the Parent Carer Forum and professionals as a quality standard in EHCPs. Current auditing shows a marked increase in the quality of plans, but outcomes can be made smarter – (quality not quantity) to improve how EHCPs can be evaluated and reviewed for progress and impact on a learner.

Quality monitoring shows that decisions are being made appropriately by professionals 2020/21. Year to date moderation of decisions show:

96% of decisions to assess were made appropriately

81% of decisions to issue plans were made appropriately

80% of decisions to secure a specialist setting were appropriate

We recognise there is a need to continue to assess the overall quality of EHCPs and outline any recommendations that are needed in order to secure further improvement in the usability and impact of the plans.

Following significant investment by the council we have also put in place a **capital building programme** to secure 300 additional places in special schools. This will increase education provision and support the timely placement of students. Further information about this work is provided in the separate paper accompanying this report.

## **Section D Children and young people with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder)**

Ofsted said there were weaknesses in the identification, assessment, diagnosis and support of those children and young people with autism spectrum disorder. So, we have:

- Secured and put in place additional project management capacity to kick start the initial improvement work.
- Undertaken base line analysis of CYP waiting for an ASD diagnostic assessment including the, stage of assessment, length of wait, support in place and any Clinical and other risk.

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- Written to all families on the waiting list to advise them of support available including signposting to online resources.
- Secured a £750k investment to address original waiting list by putting in place a number of sub-contracting arrangements for autism assessments to be completed.
- Worked with parent carers and Young Devon to develop an online survey for parents and children. This was sent to those families on the waiting list to gather their views on the effectiveness of current communication and information and to understand what communication and support they would prefer to access whilst waiting. This will inform future system design. 38 responses were received from children and young people and 270 from parents/carers.
- Reviewed the current whole system pathways against the new Neuro Developmental and Integrated Therapies Service specification. A clinical pathway re-design core group has been established.
- Mapped pre and post assessment support for children, young people and families including informal support networks such as Facebook groups.
- Working with other organisations a range of regular newsletters (Snippets; SEND; Babcock) are provided to ensure that families as well as practitioners are kept up to date with what support is available as well as provide advice.
- Set up a phone consultation service which offers practitioners as well as families on the wait list the opportunity to book a clinic slot with an ASD practitioner.
- Ran a Parent Autism Awareness Programme reaching 180 parents. Further education and support programmes such as the Cygnet programme are now provided for families virtually and therefore more widely accessible and increased reach.
- Worked with schools and Early Years settings to ensure high quality of evidence contributes to the assessment and/or diagnosis of a child with autism in line with NICE guidelines. This was achieved by:
  - Providing targeted update training for Educational Psychologist, Communication and Interaction Team and Early Years Team based on NICE guidelines
  - Use of SEND Networks, Early Years networks and SEND Update as a vehicle to support, train and advise schools/settings
- Training programmes for schools covering awareness of more specialist sessions such as Autism and PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance)
- Refreshed the family support offer for children over 8 years, re-shaping as required to ensure the needs of families with neuro-disability can be better met. As well as Children Disability Services reviewing thresholds and offer which is not diagnosis dependent.

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- Strengthened the pathway between Public Health Nursing and Portage Services for children under 5 years with speech, language and communication needs and neuro-developmental needs and increase autism awareness for public health staff through Health Education e-learning and the 'Start Well' pilot and Lets Talk More (120 Health Visitors and 10 social workers).
- Put in place a new delivery model with Careers South West and a DCC contract for youth services to DYS Space to ensure the service is able to meet the needs of all young people including those with additional needs. Appropriate individual training and development plans are agreed as part of annual review process with all staff.
- Extended the range of targeted support available through the Children Centre 'Incredible Years' programme for families with a new universal and targeted digital service.
- Steps have been put in place to manage risk and review those waiting for long times and those in transition as a priority group.
- Improvement in multi-disciplinary meetings with community paediatrician from the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital are coming together with ASD practitioners to assess and make a diagnosis.
- Instigated a waiting list recovery plan which includes intensive targeted internal work to improve the internal processes and pathways, this includes community productive programme, which looks at efficiencies and releasing time of individual practitioners to focus on direct care.
- Completed a sample review of post diagnosis reports with feedback from families. The findings being used to improve how and what is provided to parents after the assessment process which in turn will contribute to the efficiencies of the service.
- Put in place significant staff training across organisations which has included specialist around masking and gender issues and improved CPD up to masters level.
- Developed autism awareness and an enhanced language programme which has been incorporated into the standard offer for ASYE's (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment for Social Workers)
- Developed and promoted transition materials for schools.

## **Impact and Actions**

We set a target to reduce the number of children waiting for an Autism assessment by 1800. With the additional investment, services forecast to complete an additional 1012 assessments. Demand in referrals has continued to remain high with average monthly referrals to the autism assessment service being 173 per month.

The length of time that children are waiting has also increased by 14% from December 2019 to December 2020 (avg 85 weeks). The impact of Covid-19 has meant that the service has had to adapt the way it undertakes assessments with the

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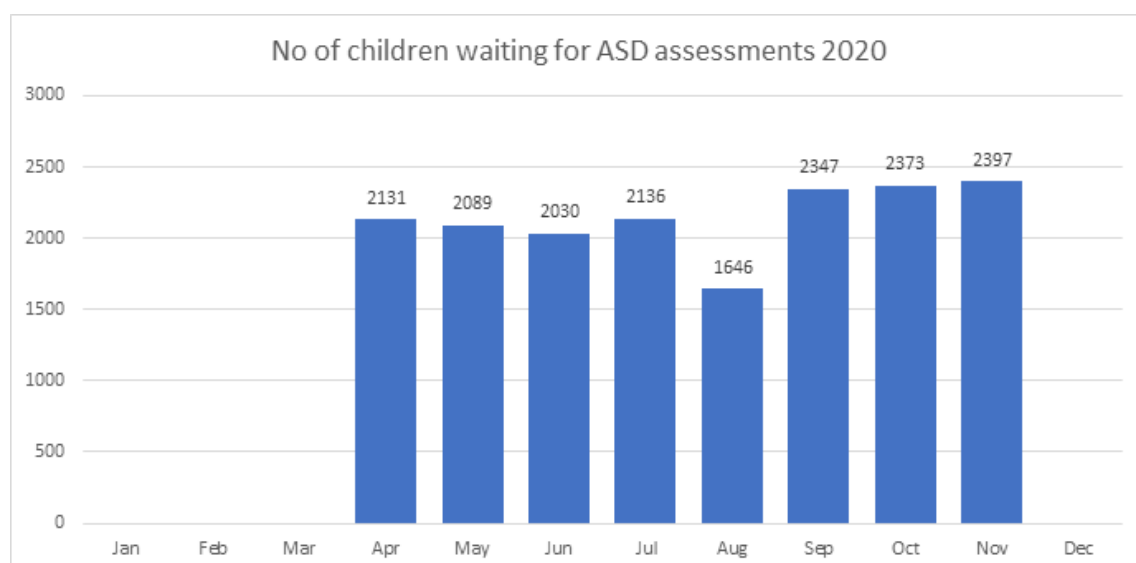
move to online platforms. Whilst for some families this has been positive and accessing the service become more flexible it does not suit everyone and face to face is preferable. Changes to the environment for safety of families and practitioners has meant an increase in length of time assessments can take to complete as well as gathering of all the information which can be dependent on assessments being done in the school environment.

Whilst families are waiting there has been a positive improvement in the support that is available with them and they are now able to contact the assessment service via the Single Point of Access for information and advice as well join online workshops to support with sleep hygiene and behaviour. In addition, frequent communication via Facebook and a weekly SNIPPETs newsletter provides information for families as to what services are available. A new 'Health Navigator' post is going to be piloted within CFHD from early 2021 which will provide support to families who are on the waiting list and help with connecting families to other sources of support that is available.

Positive impact on greater awareness, skills and capacity among workforce. Specialist autism training in ADOS and 3di assessment has been provided to increase workforce skills and capacity across health and communication and the interaction team.

We acknowledge that more needs to be done to improve communication and awareness in how to access support as well as manage the demand and expectation in referrals for a diagnosis. This programme of work continues with neuro developmental service redesign and looking at the whole pathway of provision including the early help response and school response to autism and communication and interaction.

Information on the number of children waiting for an ASD assessment are shown below

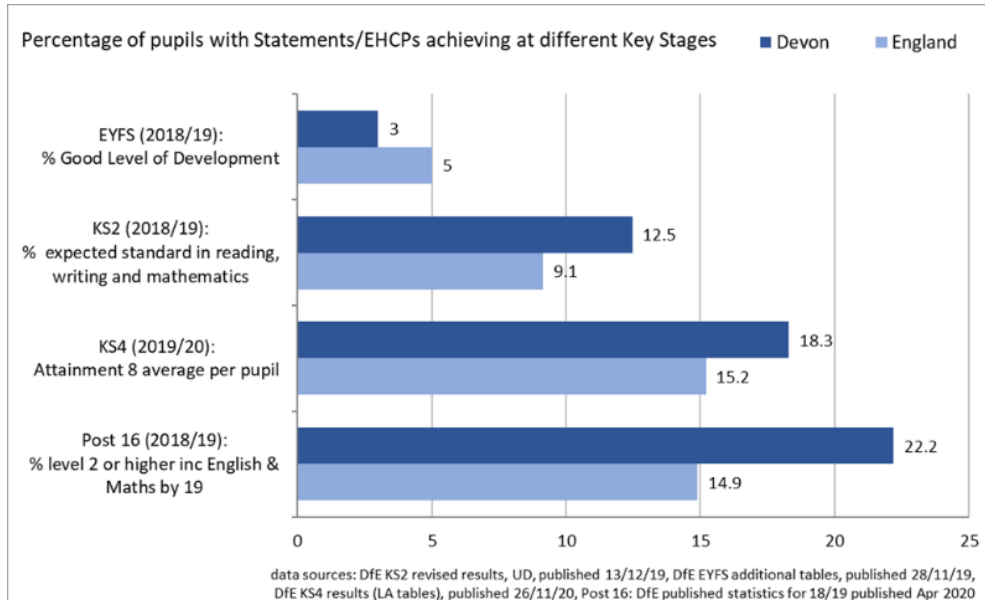


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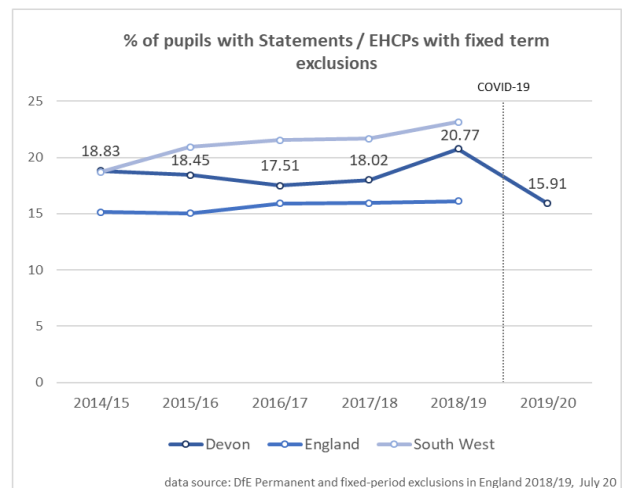
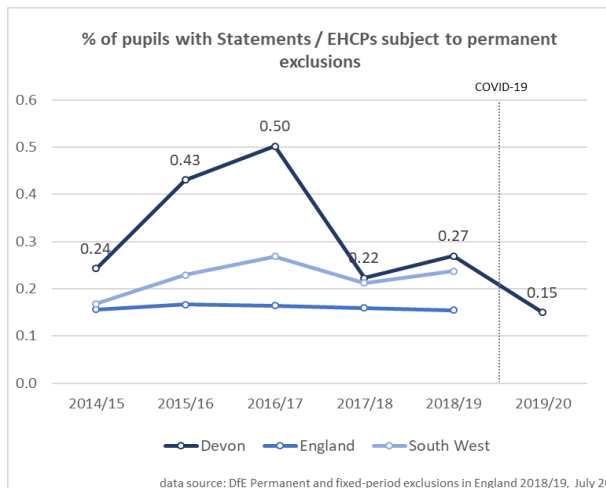
## Outcomes for children and young people with SEND

The last available data shows educational outcomes for children with EHC Plans remains well above the national average (see graph below).

### Educational outcomes KS2 and Post 16 for 2018/19 and Key stage 4 for 2019/20



As schools closed to all pupils on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and attendance was not compulsory after this time, exclusions for the 2019/20 academic year are based on the period 01/09/19 to 20/03/20.





**SEN CAPITAL PLACE PLANNING UPDATE**  
**JANUARY 2021**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 In 2018, Devon County Council's Cabinet approved a Strategic SEND Review which can be viewed at:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/archives/6396>

The plan was submitted to the Department for Education and resulted in a capital allocation of £3.4m. The plan made several recommendations including the delivery of additional pupil places.

- 1.2 In February 2020, Devon County Council's Cabinet approved a further £15m corporate funding to support the delivery of Special School places supported by an additional £5m from Basic Need Grant funding, a total investment of £20m to deliver a further 300 school places.

**2. Programme Update**

- 2.1 The original capital allocation of £3.4m was supported by additional basic need funding to provide a total pot of £7.2m. In addition, colleagues from Strategic Planning have worked collaboratively with local providers which has resulted in a successful direct bid to the DfE Free School Programme. A summary of the programme of work which has been delivered is below:

School	Additional Places	Cost £m	Notes
Marland Day	30	0.3	Additional Primary Provision – Bideford, <b>SEMH</b>
Ellen Tinkham	89	2.6	Expansion into Bodley House, <b>PMLD</b>
Ace Tiverton	70	4.3	New School, <b>ASC</b>
Glendinning Free School*	120	0	Opened in Sept 2020 in temporary accommodation (54 places) Estimated cost £7m - £10m, <b>ASC</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>7.2</b>	

All proposals have benefitted from securing Devon County assets which were or were due to be declared surplus to requirements, representing a further capital investment due to the loss of potential capital receipts.

2.2 The second phase of the programme funded from the £20m is still being developed with a number of proposals on site, others in design and some in negotiation. A number of proposals are at various stages of delivery; however, the majority now have clear timelines for delivery with a number of risks and barriers mitigated in the Autumn including planning permission. Statutory consultations, where possible, have either been completed or are in the latter phases of approval. A contingency of circa £1m remains in the programme.

2.3 The summary position is:

School	Additional Places	Estimated Cost £m	Notes
Orchard Manor Special School	54	3.4	Planning secured, due to commence in Spring/Summer 2021. ASC.
Bidwell Brook Special School	30	2.0	Project on site due to complete in 2021. PMLD.
Pathfield Special School	49	0.7	Project on site due to complete in 2021. PMLD.
Lampard	60	2.5	Project in design, start on site late 2021. ASC.
Marland Day	10	0.6	Project in design. Site due to complete Autumn. SEMH.
Marland Day	40	1.5	Negotiating purchase of site in Bideford, current estimate is delivery by Sept 2022. SEMH.
New Special School Okehampton	80	8.0	Planning approved and sponsor process commenced. Minimum 80 places. Current proposal is to open Sept 2022. SEMH.
<b>Total</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>18.7</b>	

In addition to the above, negotiations are ongoing regarding an opportunity to purchase a site adjacent to Ace Tiverton which could result in up to an additional 20 places (ASC).

### **3. Other**

- 3.1 Devon has reviewed its Section 106 policy and added an additional requirement for developers to make contributions towards SEN School Places. Due to the relatively small numbers, this can only be sought on larger developments.
- 3.2 Through the Local Planning process, the principle of housing development providing special school sites and provision has been established in Cranbrook, East Devon and the Garden Village, Cullompton, Mid Devon. Pre-application discussions have commenced with landowners regarding one of these sites. These proposals are considered medium to long term (5 – 10 years) and are subject to change.
- 3.3 Opportunities to benefit from current and future Free School rounds are being pursued including the search for new school sites, underpinned by a detailed analysis of SEN home to school transport.
- 3.4 An update to our SEN Strategic Capital review is being planned for later this year.

Simon Niles  
January 2021



25 January 2021  
Children's Scrutiny Committee  
CS/21/02

## **Domestic Violence and Abuse and Early Help** Report of the Head of Public Health Nursing

### **1. Purpose**

This report provides an update for Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee members on work to address domestic violence and abuse across Devon with a focus on Early Help arrangements.

### **2.Domestic abuse figures and trends**

The Community Safety Strategic Assessment brings together key information to assess crime, disorder and safety issues across Devon, including domestic abuse. The Assessment for financial year 2019-20 shows a 3% increase in incidents recorded by police linked to domestic abuse in Devon (11,000 incidents, 16.8 incidents per 1,000 population) on the previous year. However, the Office for National Statistics notes that police figures in recent years have been greatly affected by better reporting and increased willingness of victims to seek support. The Crime Survey for England and Wales suggests that there has been little change in the prevalence of domestic abuse in recent years. In the quarter (July-September 2020) there was a small increase in domestic abuse crimes recorded compared to the same period in the previous year, but a small decrease in the number of domestic abuse incidents.

It is certainly the case that there has been a steady increase in referrals and requests into domestic abuse services for specialist support for victims of domestic abuse in Devon in recent years, and a sharp increase since the Spring COVID-19 lockdown.

The Specialist Domestic Abuse Support Service for Devon commissioned by Devon County Council and led by Splitz Support Service saw a 60% increase in calls in April 2020 compared to April 2019. The demand has since eased but is still around 50% higher than the previous year. An increase in the complexity of cases has intensified the pressure caused by the increase in volume of demand. This includes mental health and drug and alcohol issues being worsened by lockdown pressures, child contact issues, perpetrators moving back into the family home and other factors. The Council has responded to these pressures by allocating an additional £250k of funding from the COVID-19 emergency funding received from government. This will enable the service to increase capacity in its helpdesk and recruit additional IDVAs (specialist advisers).

There has also been a substantial increase in the number of professionals seeking advice on how to support families experiencing domestic abuse. Calls to the Professionals' Helpline increased from 1-2 per week to 60 per week during the Spring lockdown. This was largely from professionals supporting families with children. Temporary additional funding was allocated by the

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Safer Devon Partnership to enable the creation of a professional consultation team to provide training for teams and individual case consultations.

Two thirds of cases receiving specialist domestic abuse support include children. The needs of children as witnesses and victims of domestic abuse are being addressed in a number of ways. The Operation Encompass initiative, which alerts a child's school the morning after the child was present at a police-attended domestic abuse incident, has seen a 38% annual increase in the number of calls to schools – over 500 calls per month on average. The initiative enables schools to provide appropriate support for children at the earliest possible opportunity, dependent upon the needs and wishes of the child.

### **3. Action to respond to Domestic Abuse**

The association between intimate partner violence and child abuse are now well known. Significant attention is given to breaking cycles of abuse and our services are careful to not overlook the needs of children when much of the focus is on the needs of the parents. Our Early Help and statutory children's services practice a child centred approach. Children are listened to so that their perspectives and experiences are understood because we know that their experiences living with domestic abuse differ, and whilst all children need to be safe, their need for support and help varies. Our involvement ranges from child centred preventative planning, child focused protection planning, and alternative permanency planning where concerted efforts are made to move children to extended family members or connected people (where it's safe to do so) so that their strong sense of identity is maintained.

Several initiatives are under way to prevent domestic abuse by identifying and intervening early and reducing repeat victimisation and perpetration. Behaviour Change Advisers working within the Integrated Offender Management programme have achieved very positive results. The approach helps perpetrators to recognise the impact of their behaviour, take responsibility for it and change it. A pilot in the Exeter area showed a dramatic reduction in repeat incidents of abuse. The programme has been extended to North and South Devon. The behaviour change approach is also being trialled with young people who show harmful behaviour in their relationships. Again, this initiative relies on fixed term funding.

### **4. Responding to the increased demands of Covid**

In addition to the £250k referred to in section 2, the Council has allocated £150k of COVID-19 emergency funding to strengthen the ability of the multi-agency Early Help locality teams to provide direct support to families experiencing domestic abuse where appropriate. Additional funds have also been allocated to enable locality teams to commission support for children and families to recover from the impact of abuse. This includes Pattern Changing, Parent-Child Recovery and counselling for young people. The funding is for a fixed term, pending evaluation of impact in April 2021.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Devon and Cornwall has recently been allocated over £400k by the Ministry of Justice to support a range of initiatives to reduce or prevent perpetration of domestic abuse. In Devon, the “Active Bystander Communities” initiative developed by Exeter University will be embedded by creating a group of trainers who can cascade the approach to local organisations and communities. The Active Bystander approach gives members of the community confidence and techniques to speak up and challenge attitudes and behaviours that lead to domestic abuse.

Devon’s Vision for Ending Domestic and Sexual Violence abuse includes a clear focus on increasing the ability of front-line professionals across the public sector to identify and respond to signs of abuse: “making domestic abuse everyone’s business”. Devon is testing and evaluating the innovative CRAFT (<https://crafttraininganddevelopment.co.uk/>) framework for identifying, assessing and working with relationship conflict, violence and abuse. CRAFT builds skills and confidence of practitioners who are already supporting other family needs including Children’s Centres, Family Intervention Team and Together Drug and Alcohol Service. This work is also being extended to the Perinatal Mental Health Team. The CRAFT programme is benefiting from additional (but still fixed term) funding from the OPCC/Ministry of Justice.

Victims of domestic abuse are often frequent users of health services, which opens valuable opportunities to identify abuse and offer support. Devon has been trialling the nationally recognised IRIS approach, which embeds skills and capacity in GP practices to identify domestic and sexual abuse experienced by patients and offer support. The Devon trial covers only 30 GP practices with funding to March 2021. The Devon Clinical Commissioning Group is considering a business case for embedding the IRIS approach in all practices on a continuing basis.

The availability of safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children is affected by the severe shortage of affordable accommodation of all kinds. Devon’s district councils, within their duties to prevent homelessness, can provide temporary accommodation in some situations. Fixed term government funding has enabled the creation of three dedicated Places of Safety (2-bedroom flats) and two further sites are being discussed with a local housing association. The refuge run by North Devon Against Domestic Abuse has eight rooms (25 bed places). It is also important to enable victims and their children to remain safely in their own homes where this is appropriate, excluding the perpetrator. This approach is not always possible, but it can keep victims and their children close to their existing support networks, limiting trauma from separation and giving better opportunities for recovery.

## **5. Domestic Abuse Bill**

At the moment, the Council has no specific statutory duty in the area of domestic abuse support services. The Domestic Abuse Bill currently before Parliament will introduce a new duty on the Council to provide domestic abuse support for victims and their children who are living in safe accommodation. To carry out this duty, the Council will be carrying out a need’s assessment,

# Agenda Item 6

cooperating with district councils and creating a new Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, leading to the creation and delivery of a strategy to provide that support. The duty will bring welcome new recurrent funding 4 from government for those specific types of support. However, it should be noted that most victims of domestic abuse seek and receive support when they are living in their communities. The broad range of initiatives listed above in prevention, action on perpetration, early intervention and recovery all take place within communities and have been made possible in Devon only through fixed term funding from a variety of local and national sources. Continuing to provide such services on a sustainable basis is a challenge to all members of the Safer Devon Partnership

## **6. Challenges and opportunities**

Perpetrator work – our service system is orientated towards responding to victims of DVA rather than the people using violent and abusing behaviours. There is good work happening in Devon to safely explore ways of engaging with people to address their abuse behaviours, notably through CRAFT workforce development, Integrated Offender Manager Behaviour Change Pilot and, more recently, the Bystander Community Intervention to support citizens to safely challenge behaviours that can maintain a culture that gives rise to violence and abuse.

We know that domestic and sexual violence and abuse are experiences which are shown to contribute to poor health, physical and mental, social and economic outcomes for people. Colleagues across the system in Devon are increasingly exploring the value of ‘trauma informed systems’ to better understand what has happened to people and what matters to them in terms of their recovery and resilience.

Insufficient and inconsistent support for pattern changing is a valuable tool for helping victims of DVA to identify and address behaviours, vulnerability and risk factors which may contribute to them being involved in abuse relationships. Funding for this work is often from ad hoc, short term sources and results in it being difficult to build a coherent and consistent pathway of support.

There is a need to improve the availability and use of data and intelligence across the partnership – including building a real time understanding of the experiences of young people and feeding this data and intelligence into ongoing services and system development.

## **7. Sustainable funding for Early Help**

Devon has seen an average 79.18% increase in demand for Early Help triage between March and October 2020 compared to 2019. Devon’s Early Help partnership response, through high frequency partnership triage meetings, has responded very effectively to increasing hidden harm, child poverty and financial hardship. To offer truly sustainable and impactful support to families, Early Help needs a secure workforce and to be able to plan for longer term delivery and outcomes. The Troubled Families Grant is fundamental to the



# Agenda Item 6

Early Help system budget, accounting for 51% of the Early Help system total spend in 2020/21. Some 44% of the staff team in Devon are funded through this grant and the annual renewal of the grant has inevitably impacted adversely on staff retention and longer-term planning for the system. This creates considerable risk to the sustainability of the work.

Devon County Council has worked hard to ensure that the 2021/22 local government settlement includes ringfenced funding for the Troubled Families programme so that Early Help services in Devon can continue to be delivered throughout the next financial year. There is a long-term funding commitment to the Troubled Families programme (or equivalent), ensuring that local authorities and partners are able to make long term sustainable plans to prevent children and families reaching 'crisis point', and support them to thrive into the future.

Kate Stephens  
Head of Public Health Nursing

# Agenda Item 6

## **Appendix A - Resources for children in Devon who have witnessed / experienced DV**

**Splitz**- (including a young person's IDVA)- commissioned services County wide -available for Children 5+

Toolkits form Splitz for all professionals to use with 1-1 sessions or group sessions (year cohorts at schools for instance) for both primary aged children and secondary children.

**North Devon against Domestic Abuse** - North Devon

**DART** – Domestic Abuse Recovering Together- 7-14 year olds

**Devon Rape Crisis**- county wide - 13+

**Children Centres (AFC)** – County wide – under 8s

**DACS Counselling** (North Devon) – counselling for children aged 8 and over that have been affected by DV

**South West Family Values** (South -Teignbridge and South Hams) – Children's keep safe group and 1-1 sessions

**Community Links** – (West Devon- Okehampton and Tavistock) – 1-1 support for all children -mentoring / counselling sessions

**SAFE** -Stop Abuse for Everyone – Project 30- in Exeter and East Devon- all ages for children

25 January 2021

## **Briefing Note for Children's Scrutiny Committee**

### **A Peer Review of Devon Youth Offending Service by Essex Youth Offending Service.**

#### **1. Context**

Devon Youth Offending Service was last inspected by HMI Probation in July 2015. Although no grading was given for the inspection, the report highlighted a mixed picture of excellent creative work and areas that were not adequate. The identified actions gave a picture of the service requiring improvement. It is anticipated that Devon Youth Offending Service will be inspected by HMI Inspection anytime from March 2021. A peer review will provide a sense check on the quality of service that is currently being delivered and serve as valuable preparation for the forthcoming inspection.

Essex Youth Offending Service was inspected by HMI Probation in early October 2018 and was rated as Outstanding. Essex Children's Services hold Partners in Practice status and have undertaken Peer Reviews in Devon's Social Work Teams as well as other Local Authorities. Essex Youth Offending Service are establishing themselves as 'professional support' for other Youth Offending Services who are striving to provide a good and outstanding service.

#### **2. The Peer Review offer**

In October and November 2020, in preparation for the peer review, Essex Youth Offending Service supported Devon Youth Offending Service in establishing a Quality Assurance Framework. This has involved re-designing the audit tool and pairing auditors in Devon with auditors in Essex, to ensure consistency in review and a learning opportunity. By mid-November 2020, over 25 audits had been undertaken.

These audits have shown some consistent themes that we would expect to also be identified in the peer review. Strengths are that very strong relationships are being built with young people and their families and that innovative and supportive programmes of work have continued during the current pandemic. Interventions are being delivered in a positive, impactful and meaningful way. Assessments are completed to a high standard and, when asked during the audit process, young people and their families say they are very grateful for the support they have had, which has assisted them in improving their lives. Areas for further development include that assessments are sometimes delayed (tighter monitoring of this has been introduced), plans were sometimes confusing and did not fully capture the young people's views (full service training has been undertaken to address this) and feedback surveys did not always capture the positive views gathered above (young people's feedback has been improved and parents feedback processes have been greatly increased).

# Agenda Item 7

In terms of the peer review, Essex Youth Offending Service has agreed to undertake the following;

- Analysis of current practice using the 3 main domains of the HMIP inspection framework;
  1. Organisational Delivery
  2. Court Disposals
  3. Out of Court Disposals.
- A sample of cases will be reviewed using Essex Youth Offending Service's QA format and triangulate with Devon's own case audit to provide a peer benchmark.
- Review of the approach of Devon to the use of Restorative Justice and involvement of victims of crime.
- Review the involvement and inclusion of young people and their families in work with Devon YOS.
- Review of the Education offer to YP involved with YOS and the strength of partnership working in relation to this.

### **3. Methodology**

1. Staff survey.
2. Review of key policies and procedures.
3. Online meetings/focus groups with:
  - Management Board
  - Devon Youth Offending Service Manager
  - Management Team
  - Case Managers
  - Staff groups.
  - Young People/Parents/Carers.
4. Case file review of small sample (Court and Out of Court Disposals) of previously and recently audited cases using Essex's Quality Assurance processes to include a discussion with the case manager and possibly the young person and parent/carer.
5. Video or Telephone conference post review meeting to discuss findings.
6. Post review report highlighting the strengths, areas to for development and action.

### **4. Timescales**

The peer review will formally commence on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021, when Devon Youth Offending Team's 'Story of Place' will be presented in verbal and written format. The peer review will take place remotely over an eight-week period. By the end of week five, all the information will have been gathered, leaving weeks six and seven for the writing of the report to be presented in verbal and written format in week 8.

Findings will be presented to a future Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

# Agenda Item 7

Reading the reports of recent YOS inspections, it is anticipated by Devon YOS that Essex will rate Domains Two (Court Disposals) and Three (Out of Court Disposals) as 'good', but that Domain One (Organisational Delivery focussing particularly on the role of the YOS Management Board) is likely to be rated as 'Requires Improvement'. Devon YOS Management Board has become more effective in the last 12 months, doubling the frequency of Board meetings and becoming more involved in judging the quality of the work of the YOS. Given the standard that inspections are seeking, however, it is likely that some further improvements will be required.

**Thor Beverley**  
**Devon Youth Offending Service Manager**

**Jenny-Ellen Scotland**  
**Locality Director**



## **Report of the Children's Standing Overview Group – December 2020**

### **1. Introduction**

The Children's Scrutiny Committee Standing Overview Group meets regularly throughout the year to consider key updates and pertinent issues from across Children's Services, with the aim of developing Members knowledge and understanding, and bringing to the forefront any areas which may benefit from further scrutiny.

This report outlines the topics covered at the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020, highlights the key points raised during discussion and details any agreed actions.

### **2. Attendance**

Councillors Rob Hannaford (Chair), Su Aves, Julian Brazil, Iain Chubb, Jonathan Hawkins, Linda Hellyer, Richard Hosking, Tony Inch, Philip Sanders, Andrew Saywell, Debo Sellis, Margaret Squires and Mrs Christina Mabin (Church of England)

Cabinet Member: Councillor James McInnes

Children's Services: Jo Olsson (Chief Officer for Children's Services), Dawn Stabb (Head of Education & Learning), Rachel Gillott (Acting Head of Children's Social Care), Fiona Fleming (Head of Commissioning – Children's Services), Vivien Lines (Improvement Director) and Kate Mulford (Commissioning Manager)

Department for Education: Eleanor Brazil (Children's Commissioner)

Children's Scrutiny Special Advisor: Kevin Crompton

Scrutiny Officer: Vicky Church

### **3. Notes and Actions**

#### **3.1 Self-Assessment and Self-Evaluation**

Jo Olsson, Chief Officer for Children's Services introduced the Self-Assessment and the Self-Evaluation. The Self-Assessment provides an up-to-date evaluation of the needs of children and families within Devon, effectiveness of current service provision and performance in improving outcomes for children and young people. As part of the South West Region annual programme of sector-led improvement, it also provides an opportunity to receive peer challenge within the region; share good practice; and identify regional priorities and programme of support for the coming year.

The Self-Evaluation is produced as part of the ILACS (Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services) framework and will inform the Ofsted Annual Conversation on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021. This year's Self-Evaluation has been prepared with a consciousness that the 2019 Self-Evaluation

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failed to bring to light the significant issues around support and accommodation for care leavers later highlighted through the March 2020 'inadequate' Ofsted judgement.

Fiona Fleming, Head of Commissioning, drew Members attention to the key areas of the Self-Assessment.

## Progress on areas for improvement from the last self-assessment

- SEND (Special Educational Needs); significant progress has been made through the Written Statement of Action across all four key areas, including the timeliness of EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plans);
- Placement Stability; good progress has been made, although this area remains a key priority and is being taken forward through a refreshed Sufficiency Strategy;
- Outcomes for disadvantaged children (narrowing the gap); progress to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged children this year has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, but these issues are continuing to be addressed with Babcock and wider partners;
- Rate of teenage care entry; which saw a significant increase in the 6 months prior to the beginning of the pandemic (up 27%), but which has decreased by almost 15% since March; the Edge of Care service implemented from September 2020 is key part of the Council's continued response.

## Regional Areas for Improvement Last year

- To improve the quality of practice; much work still to be done in this area, highlighted by this years' inadequate Ofsted judgement, but a great deal of activity is being taken forward to accelerate the necessary improvement;
- To develop a skilled and stable children's services workforce; while this has been achieved in the majority of areas, there has been a significant deterioration in the stability of the social work workforce; this is being address through the new Recruitment and Retention Strategy;
- To increase the effective management of demand and risk; being addressed through demand analysis and modelling, and risk assessments for all open social work cases throughout the pandemic.

## Top Three Outcomes we are Proud of Achieving This Year

- Early Help; this has continually improved over the last year, received positive feedback from Ofsted and played a crucial role in the partnership's respond to Covid-19;
- Partnership support for most vulnerable children during Covid-19 and lessons learned; achieved through the Children's Incident Management Team, processes supporting vulnerable children at school and innovative ways of working in Public Health Nursing;
- Improvement of EHCP timeliness and parental engagement; timeliness is above the national average.

Also outlined were the Top Four Outcomes We Need to Improve:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice;
- Identifying and responding to neglect;
- Support for care leavers;
- The lived experience of children with SEND – the transformation of SEND services;

and the Top Three Risks for the Future:

- Increased demand on Children's Services, resulting from the Covid-19 lockdown and the financial impact of public services;



- High-Needs Block Funding;
- Workforce instability and recruitment challenges, including social workers and health visitors.

Rachel Gillott, Acting Head of Children's Social Care, presented the Self-Evaluation highlighting the services key challenges and priorities going forward.

### Key challenges

- Senior leadership changes;
- High rates of repeat child protection plans;
- High rates of adolescent care entry;
- Supporting care leavers with the most complex needs;
- Stabilising the frontline social work workforce;
- Confidence in answering the 'so what?' question; making sure we know what difference we are making in all areas.

### Priorities for the next 12 months

- Sustaining improvement work; working effectively with children experiencing chronic neglect and with care leavers;
- Maintaining and embedding improvements in corporate parenting;
- Ensuring we understand the impact of our Edge of Care response;
- Evaluating the impact of practice improvement through effective quality assurance;
- Delivery of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy;
- Workforce development, including embedding Restorative Practice; delivering outstanding practitioners and managers for the future;
- Working with partners to minimise the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on children and families;
- Ensure the financial stability of children's services.

Dawn Stabb, Head of Education and Learning highlighted the relevant areas from the Self-Assessment in terms Education and Early Help. Due to the pandemic, this years' Self-Assessment does not contain GCSE results, Key Stage 1 and 2 test results or Ofsted inspections outcomes as would usually be the case. The pandemic has however had a wide-ranging impact on children and families in Devon including considerably increases in free school meal claims, significant increases in youth unemployment and rises in demand for domestic abuse support.

A number of improvements to SEND support have been achieved through the WSOA including:

- Induction training, recognised as national good practice;
- A new Local Offer;
- SEND transformation programme;
- Stronger engagement with parents;
- Significant improvements in EHCP timeliness;
- 'Good' EHCP charter;
- Improved waiting times for Autism assessments and better pre and post diagnostic support.

For Children in Care, attendance figures are higher than the national average for all students and we have seen significant improvements in Key Stage 4 outcomes.

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Early Help services have been a huge strength during the Covid-19 pandemic, playing a crucial role in the frontline delivery of the partnership response, providing broad multi-agency support for the most vulnerable children during the pandemic.

Further discussion was held around:

- The preference for children to be placed in foster care over residential care settings, but that this is not always possible due to insufficiency of suitable foster placements; children in residential settings are closely monitored by the Acting Head of Children's Social Care and suitable foster placements continue to be sought for them;
- The preference to work with local authorities across the peninsula to address issues around social worker pay and conditions, rather than create an overly competitive environment which can increase instability in the long term;
- Staff shortages in Public Health Nursing continue but there are strategies in place which are addressing this;
- The joint education and health strategy across the STP area on speech and language work and support; there is potential for Scrutiny to look at this in more detail;
- Life story work, which is well established for children in foster care and residential care; work is ongoing to embed this more consistently in the care leavers' service;
- Working with 'Outstanding' authorities to improve our own practice, while recognising Devon's unique needs and qualities;
- The Social Work in schools pilot, which Scrutiny may wish to examine in more detail.

## 3.2 Care Leaver Accommodation and Sufficiency

Kate Mulford, Commissioning Manager provided Members with a presentation covering Care Leaver's Accommodation and Sufficiency. Key points included:

### Care Leaver Accommodation

- Currently a range of services are provided which are meeting the needs of a large proportion of 16/17 year olds and care leavers, however there is small proportion of these young people with complex needs whose needs are not being met;
- Sufficiency of accommodation is not just about the provision of housing/buildings, it's about having the right support in place alongside this;
- There are ongoing partnerships with district colleagues and health partners to achieve this;
- Risks around unregulated housing (including supported living), as identified by the Children's Commissioner in her recent report are now being mitigated by robust quality assurance and contract monitoring arrangements;
- Supported living options are delivered through 14 contracted providers, 148 potential placements in supported lodgings and semi-independent supported accommodation;
- Homelessness prevention strategies are multi-agency and include work to stabilise tenancies and decrease the use of emergency accommodation; every young person in unsuitable accommodation is tracked weekly by managers to ensure immediate follow up and that actions are taken;
- The Market Development Plan is concentrating on four areas; young people who are considered to be 'high risk'; emergency placements; links to Early Help Pathway Planning and Children in Need services; and sufficiency of (and access to) available accommodation.

### Sufficiency (children's residential care)

- 77% of Children in Care are currently in a fostering placement;

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- Of those children who are in residential care placements, 86% have been placed in Devon or with neighbouring authorities;
- Quality Assurance is delivered through Ofsted Regulation, Quality Monitoring and Contract Management.

Further discussion was held around:

- The reasons behind children being placed in residential care outside of Devon, which can be due to the complexity of children's needs, but is very often sufficiency;
- Previous work with the residential care market, including many small, local residential care homes meant that children's services were able to respond well to arising needs during the pandemic;
- Currently the market is able to respond well to Devon's needs;
- Some delays to placements have been as a result of court delays; very few children have their placements delayed due to waiting for a care plan; a great deal of work is put into finding suitable placements prior to the court order so arrangements can be made immediately;
- Regular meetings are held with district colleagues (every 6 weeks) to address issues with 16/17 year old and care leaver accommodation;
- Supported living placements include family environments which are similar to foster care placements but which provide more independence for the young person; officers undertook to provide Members with more detail around types of supported living placements and other accommodation available to 16/17 year olds and care leavers;
- Concern raised by Members about the number of street attached young people in Exeter, which Scrutiny may wish to examine in more detail.

### **3.3 Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Children's Standing Overview is scheduled for Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

**Councillor Rob Hannaford**  
**Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Committee**



## **Report of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

### **1. Introduction**

The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Joint Scrutiny Group is an informal meeting of representative Scrutiny Members from Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council and has been established to maintain a strategic overview of the activity and performance of Adopt South West, the RAA for Devon, Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay, and report any significant findings or recommendations back to individual local authority scrutiny committees.

The main focus of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group is the monitoring of the performance of Adopt South West across the RAA area, including:

- adopter sufficiency and recruitment/retention of adopters
- adoption success/breakdown data
- adoption timescales
- sufficiency of adoption support services
- outcomes for adopted children and families

This report outlines the topics covered at the Group's first meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020, highlights the key points raised during discussion, and details any agreed actions or recommendations back to the individual local authority Scrutiny Committees.

### **2. Attendance**

#### **Scrutiny Members**

Devon County Council: Councillors Rob Hannaford (Chair) and Debo Sellis

Somerset County Council: Councillor Leigh Redman

Plymouth City Council: Councillors Terri Beer and Pauline Murphy

Torbay Council: Councillor Nick Bye

#### **Other attendees**

Councillor Frances Nicholson (Somerset County Council), Chair of the Adopt South West Strategic Partnership Board

Kath Drescher (Devon County Council), Adopt South West Service Manager

Vicky Church (Devon County Council), Scrutiny Officer

Jamie Jackson (Somerset County Council), Scrutiny Manager

### **3. Notes and Actions**

#### **3.1 Terms of Reference**

Vicky Church, Scrutiny Officer introduced the [draft Terms of Reference for the Group](#), which was welcomed.

Members discussed the need for each of the four local authorities to continue to scrutinise adoption in their own areas at their Scrutiny Committees, but welcomed the opportunity to come together to consider the performance of Adopt South West and outcomes for families across the

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RAA. Members also considered the benefits of the group meeting once every six months rather than annually.

## Actions:

- (a) that the Group meet twice a year, where business requires;
- (b) that the Terms of Reference be approved, [subject to an amendment](#) reflecting (a) above.

## 3.2 Adopt South West Annual Report 2019/20

Councillor Frances Nicholson, Chair of the Adopt South West Strategic Partnership Board and Kath Drescher, Adopt South West Service Manager presented the [Adopt South West Annual Report](#) to the Members of the Group, which describes the Regional Adoption Agency's first full year of service. Members welcomed the report and key areas discussed included:

- **Work undertaken in the first 18 months of operation** including establishing brand identity, consolidation of staff group, consultation with adopters as key stakeholders, establishing a quality assurance framework, working closely with birth parents, supporting the development of both Adopt South West staff and colleagues in the four local authorities and delivery of the service in accordance with requirements detailed in the Inter Authority agreement;
- **Upcoming Peer Review** (7-11 December 2020) led by partners in practice Essex County Council;
- **Significant budgetary pressures**, mostly resulting from interagency fees; 77% of children are currently placed with Adopt South West adopters but other adoption agencies are used to find families for 13% of children; the only way to reduce this cost is by recruiting more adopters through Adopt South West and this continues to be a key area of focus;
- **Adopter sufficiency** which was a significant area of concern through 2019/20, but is seeing considerable improvement; this year has seen an average of nine adopters a month be approved, compared to five a month last year; there are still issues around potential adopters coming forward in Torbay, and Adopt South West are working with the local authority to understand the reasons for this and find solutions;
- **Enquiries from potential adopters** are continuing at a good steady rate; there tends to be a considerable amount of time between people thinking about adoption, to making enquiries, and then to actually applying, so there is always a delay from investment in recruitment and marketing, to seeing improvements in adopter sufficiency and adoption rates;
- **National Adoption week** October 2019 – a lot of work went into online marketing, working with local media and there was a considerable growth seen in social media engagement; following this, early 2020 saw a surge of adoption enquires;
- **Delays in court processes** as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in lower numbers of children coming through the system ready to be placed for adoption; there is an expectation that as things return to normal there will be a lot of children coming through at the same time, and so work is being done in the interim with adopters currently in the assessment stage, so that they are ready to adopt as soon as possible;
- **National adoption campaigns** this year have focussed on recruiting adopters from BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities, and this continues to be a priority across the Adopt South West area;
- **A range of therapeutic services** can be accessed by families through the Adoption Support Fund; of the 700 adopters who remain in touch, 30 families are currently needing significant support;

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- **Looking forward to 2021** - adopter sufficiency, consistency of decision making and close working relationships with all four local authorities will continue to be key priorities;
- **Progress has been made around many of the challenges** detailed in the annual report including significant headway around the capacity of medical advisors in Somerset, and developing an effective case management system which is expected to up and running by the end of 2020; continuing to operate and adapt through the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery period is expected to continue to offer some challenges.

## 3.3 Future Meetings

Members discussed the usefulness of the meeting which brought together all four local authority scrutiny leads to discuss the progress and performance of the Adopt South West RAA.

### **Action:**

- (a) That the next meeting of the group be held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 at 10am, chaired and hosted by Plymouth City Council;
- (b) That consideration be given to holding all future meetings 'virtually' due to the distance Members and officers may be required to travel.

**Councillor Rob Hannaford**  
**Chair of RAA Joint Scrutiny Group**

