

## **Update on the recommendations from the Children's Scrutiny Committee Education, Health and Care Plan Task Group**

### **Report of the Head of Education and Learning**

The scrutiny task group's independent investigation began in July 2018. Devon had an Area SEND Inspection in December 2018 and in response the local area produced a Written Statement of Action (WSOA). In their [report](#) the task group was pleased to acknowledge that some of their recommendations were already recognised within the SEND partnership Implementation Plan and in addition targeted actions were included within the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) that will be monitored by Ofsted and CQC.

Updates on the actions included within the Written statement of action have been presented on a quarterly basis to scrutiny and also provided on the Local Authority Website.

#### Task Group Recommendations

### **1. Invest in appropriate resources and support in the 0-25 Team to enable staff to effectively meet the increasing volume and complexity of needs for children and young people with SEN.**

#### **Update:**

Since the task and finish group investigation work started in July staffing levels have increased by a further 6 staff (on top of the additional 9 staff appointed in April 2018.). This has allowed work to be split so one part of the team are able to focus on new requests whilst another team can now focus on ensuring reviews for those with an existing plan take place in timely way. This change was undertaken in consultation with the SEN team and has made a significant difference and whilst the calendar year average is 32%, in November 63% of plans were issued on time. We anticipate that the annual average will improve significantly for Jan 2020 and continue in an upward trajectory.

A new online case management system is also being introduced to help make it easier for all professionals and parents to access information relating to the progress and content of EHCP plans without the need to contact the SEN team directly. The timing of this release has been based on feedback to and from the SEN team.

However, the number of pupils with a plan continues to grow at an increased rate which in turn means the team continue to work under pressure. The year on year increases are shown in the table below.

|   | Jan 2015 | Jan 2016 | Jan 2017 | Jan 2018 | Jan 2019 | Jan 2020 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Pupils with Statement/EHCP maintained by Devon LA*1 | 3,572    | 3,510    | 3,718    | 4,093    | 5,162    | 6544     |

Whole service meetings over the past year have focused on providing clear and consistent messages to all DCC staff. Bi-annual briefings to update and reinforce messages have also taken place with schools and regularly at SENDCO forums.

In order to ensure staff feel they can share their concerns, drop in sessions with senior managers have been arranged and CPD opportunities have been a focus of a training day. To protect the health and wellbeing of staff the unacceptable behaviour policy has been rigorously enforced with senior managers taking the lead as needed.

Re-organising the SEN team has allowed the further development of the SEN manager roles to ensure regular supervision is in place and a clear focus on the increasingly complex and difficult cases the SEN team are managing. Weekly case supervision is in place.

## **2. Improve the quality of Plans to ensure provision and support meets the needs of the child and young person.**

### **Update**

The operational delivery group, which is a workstream of the SEND improvement board, has reviewed the guidance and advice to professionals regarding the quality of content and advice provided in the plans. An EHCP exemplar has also been agreed between professionals, parents and independent advisors as an example of effective practice. It should however be noted that every plan will be different to ensure it effectively reflects the needs of the individual child.

Quality assurance checks now take place on a regular basis. These checks not only focus on the overall plan but have sometimes focused on one particular theme; post 16, the views of young people, how parental views are reflected in the plan. The parent feedback forms have been redesigned with a clear lead from parents. They now ensure that information reflects practice at four different stages of parental experience; pre-assessment, during assessment, at EHCP issue and post plan implementation.

Review processes are being considered to address timely response to reviews and appropriate prioritisation of any placement changes. The review process will include checking and confirmation from schools about implementation of plans. Spot checking and auditing will be used to have in depth quality assurance of implementation provision. High costs specialist placements have additional QA visits from the SEN team.

## **3. Achieve good outcomes for children and young people with an EHCP in all Devon schools.**

### **Update**

As outlined in the report we have continued to lobby Government to ensure fairer funding for Devon pupils both within the funding allocated to schools and for high

needs block funding. This has included visits and briefings to the then Secretary of State, Damien Hinds, and continued work with the National [F40 group](#), which Councillor McInnes continues to Chair.

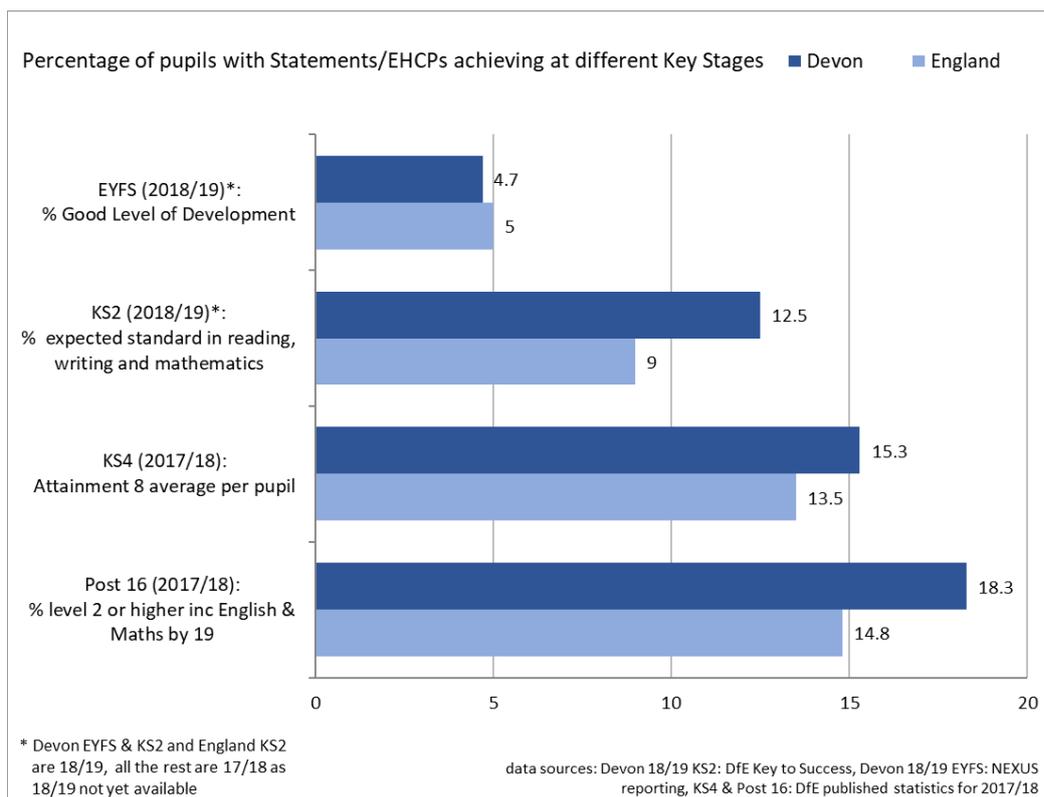
The requirement for additional funding has been partially recognised by the government and Devon schools will receive approximately £20 million more in their budgets for 2020/21. However, this still leaves Devon as one of the lowest funded local authorities.

The High Needs block will also receive additional funding of £6.8 million but this falls far short of the funding gap we are currently predicting (£23.8 million by April 2020).

We have continued to promote that Local Authority maintained Special Schools should be able to open new specialist provision, to allow Local Authorities to better manage and meet demand for specialist school places for children and young people with Special Educational Needs in Devon; currently, however, there is no sign that the existing Free school requirement will change.

We have however increased the number of places available in our maintained special schools to 1,148 (2019/20) and rising to 1,266 in (2020/21). Subject to budget ratification DCC capital group have agreed to £15 million to further extend this provision and secure an additional 200 school places. This will be combined with a free school application for up to a further 100 places, giving a total of 300 places; This additional state funded provision could decrease our costs of future placements by nearly £6 million per year.

Children with EHCPs in Devon continue to achieve better than seen Nationally. The table below provides the latest available outcomes for each key stage. More detailed information has been provided in the annual report.



Recommendations included in Sections 4 of 5 of the Task group report are covered under reporting to Scrutiny on the Written Statement of Action, as described in the introduction to this paper. Links to the latest online updates can be found [here](#).

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**Electoral Divisions:** All

Cabinet Member for Children Services and Schools: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Childrens Services: Jo Olsson

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact for Enquiries: Dawn Stabb, Head of Education and Learning

| BACKGROUND PAPER | DATE | FILE REFERENCE |
|------------------|------|----------------|
| Nil              |      |                |