

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 10th and 14th 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

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.

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.

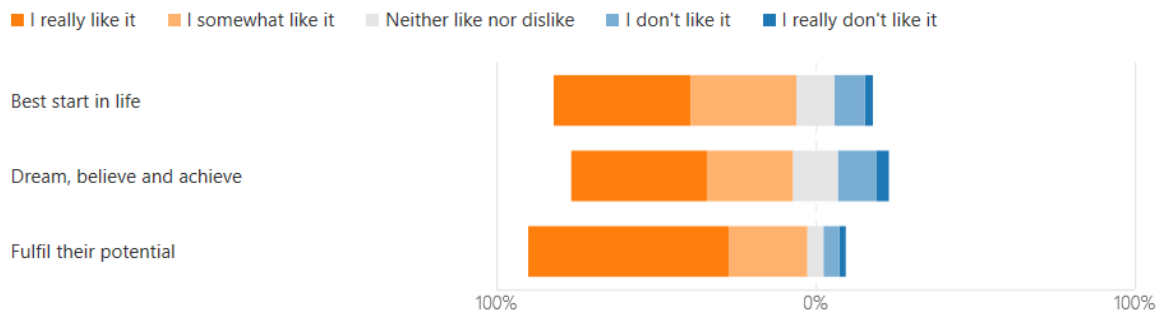
It was well attended by parent carers, professionals from all services involved in the SEND Transformation (The Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS providers, SEND 0-25, Babcock, Disabled Children's Service, Adult Social Care, Children's Services Commissioning, Participation Team, Children's Social Care, 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.

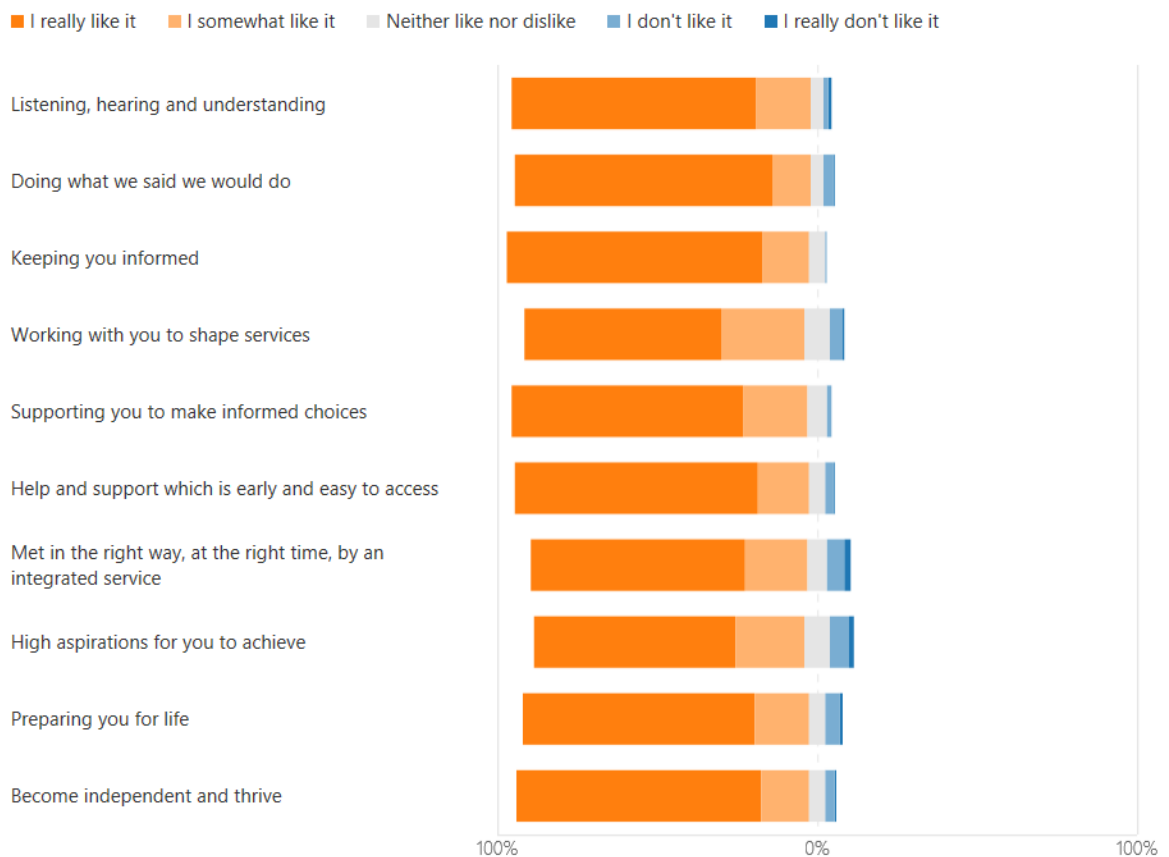
The feedback from the workshop on the key things that children and young people with SEND and their families wanted now and in the future was used to develop four proposals for a vision. Members of the Vision and Strategy workstream consulted with their networks to identify which of the four proposals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

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

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.

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.

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.

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 a 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:

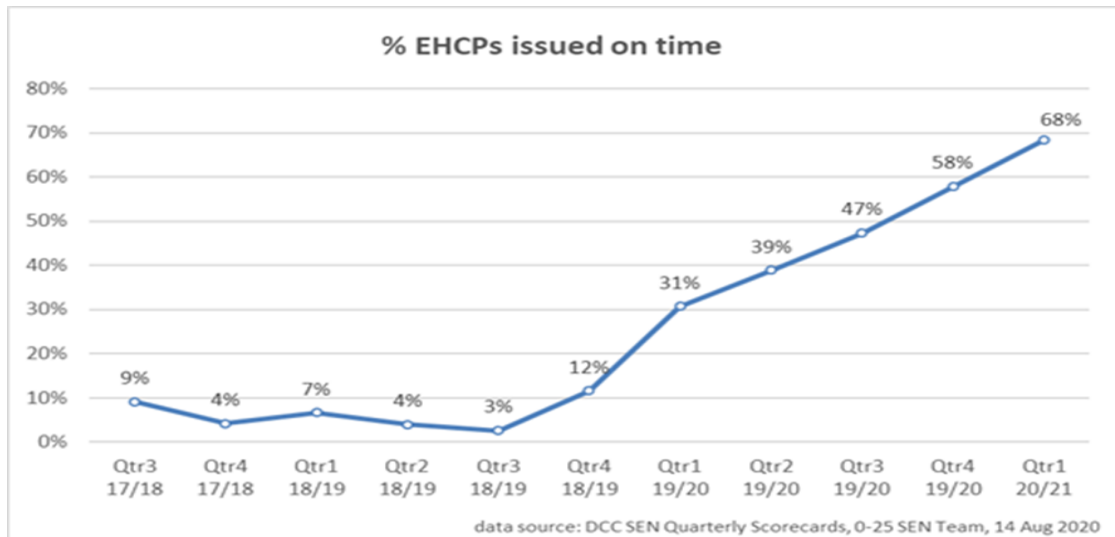
- Reviewed the Education Health and Care (EHC) assessment process to identify delays and time efficiencies.
- Revised EHC assessment workflow processes have been agreed, and timeframe published.
- Put in place monthly reporting to the SEND Operational Delivery Group on the timeliness of professional 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

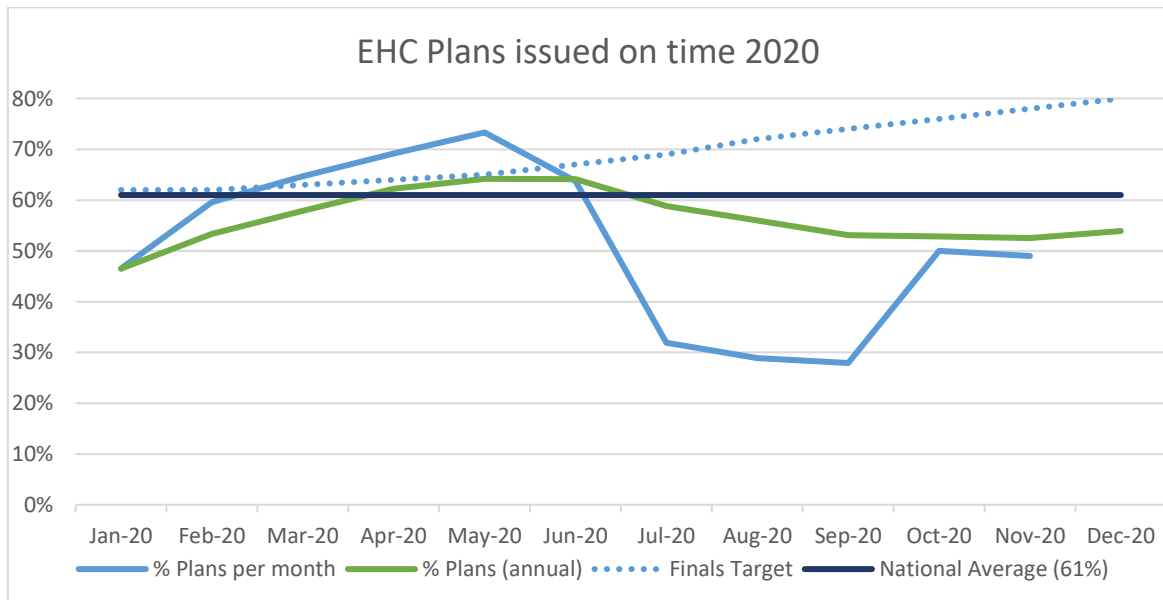
At the time of the inspection the timeliness of EHCPs was 4%, by May of 2021 this had improved to 73%; which was above the latest known national average of 61%. However, the impact of Covid-19 had an effect on availability of professionals and

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.

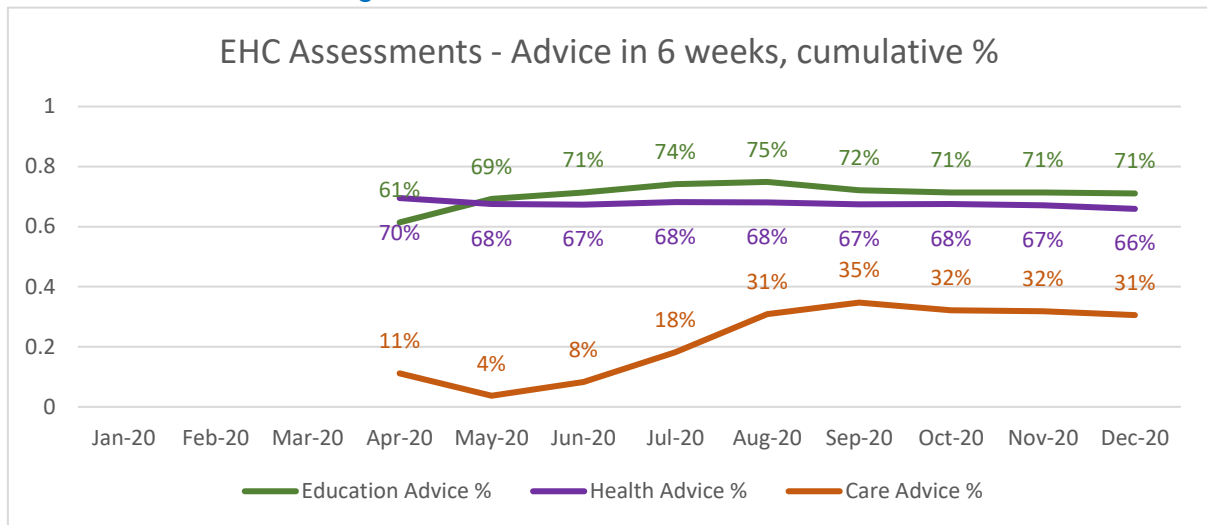


In December 2020 timeliness had recovered from the impact of Covid-19 and the overall timeliness sustained at 53% of plans issued on time. Prior to the latest lockdown timeliness was back on an upward trajectory.



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

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.

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.

- 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.

- 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

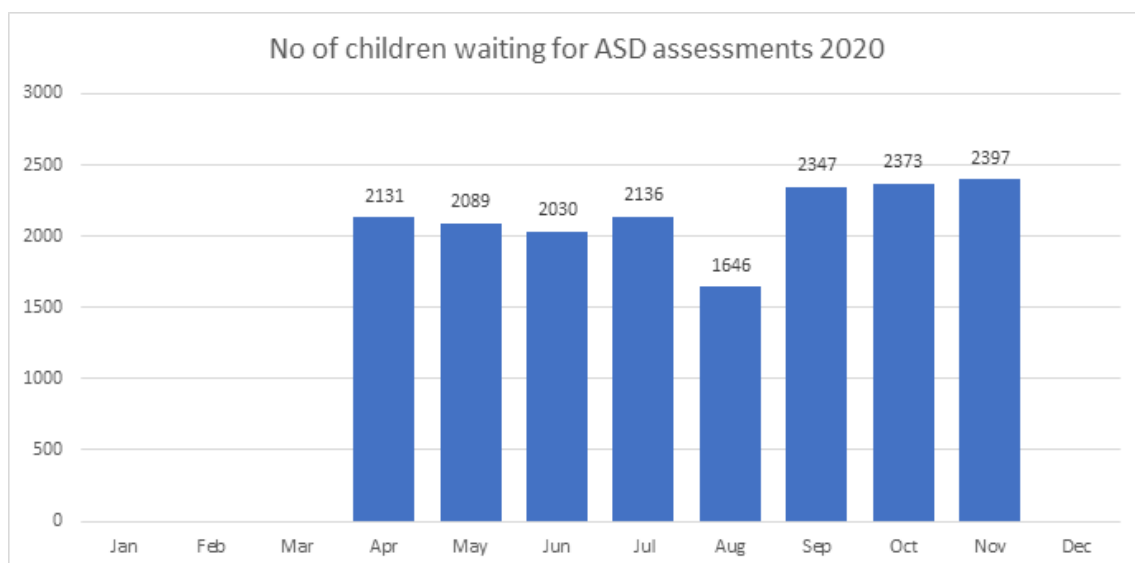
move to online platforms. Whilst for some families this has been positive and accessing the service become more flexible it does not suit everyone and face to face is preferable. Changes to the environment for safety of families and practitioners has meant an increase in length of time assessments can 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.

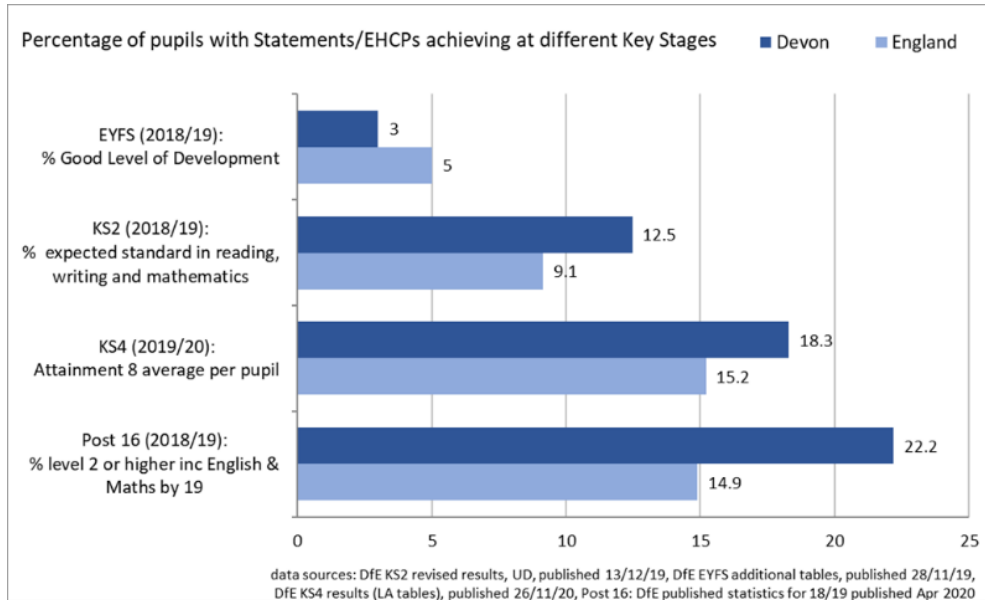
Information on the number of children waiting for an ASD assessment are shown below



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 20th 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.

