

# **CUMBRIA HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

**Meeting date: 10 July 2020**

**From: Linda Clegg, Independent Chair, Cumbria SEND Improvement Board**

## **SEND IMPROVEMENT UPDATE**

### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 *This report provides the Health and Wellbeing Board with a strategic update in relation to the SEND improvement programme. This is the first update received since February 2020 due to the April 2020 Board cancellation as a result of Covid 19.*
- 1.2 *The report highlights the impact of Covid 19 on the improvement programme of activity, provides a recap of the progress made to date in the delivery of our Written Statement of Action, and highlights areas that require increased momentum and focus to secure the required transformation.*
- 1.3 *The report concludes with the ‘ask’ of Board members in endorsing and supporting the ongoing prioritisation and commitment of partners working together, to ensure the drive and capacity to secure the necessary improvements.*

### **2.0 LINKS TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY**

- 2.1 Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to improve the quality of services, a person's experience of the system and also to reduce inequalities. The 2019 SEND local area inspection identified areas of improvement relating to these issues which the SEND Improvement Programme through the actions set out in our WSOA will address. One of the existing priorities is that ‘children have the best start in life’ and this is fundamentally aligned with this programme of activity.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 *That the Board note the update in relation to the SEND improvement programme of activity including: the impact of Covid 19 upon the programme of work, the progress made and the areas that require continuing focus.*

- 3.2 ***That the Board re-state the continued priority and sustained commitment of lead partners to this programme of work across the partnership.***

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The SEND improvement programme of activity was initiated following the local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and the CQC in March 2019, which resulted in the requirement to produce a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) in response to nine priority areas for improvement. Cumbria's WSOA was formally approved by Ofsted on the 18 October 2019.
- 4.2 The areas for improvement related to the following thematic areas: understanding local need, joint commissioning, engagement and co-production with parents and carers, emotional health and wellbeing, preparation for adulthood and SEN Support.
- 4.3 The delivery of the WSOA is the joint responsibility of the Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Groups. Ofsted and the CQC will undertake a revisit (likely to be towards the end of 2021) to judge the extent to which we have delivered against the commitments set out in the WSOA. The ultimate sanction for a failure to secure the necessary improvements is a formal Improvement Notice.
- 4.4 Our governance structure for delivery of the WSOA is an independently chaired partnership Improvement Board, with six working groups leading on thematic areas of delivery.
- 4.5 The DfE/NHS England are responsible for undertaking formal progress evaluation meetings. During Covid 19 these have paused and been replaced by bi-monthly 'keeping in touch' meetings to discuss progress. The first formal DfE progress evaluation did take place in February 2020 and noted that while progress was being made, there were areas of slippage as well as a need to focus attention to the evidencing of impact.

## **5.0 KEY AREAS OF PROGRESS AND STRENGTH TO HIGHLIGHT TO THE BOARD**

- 5.1 Covid 19 has presented unprecedented challenges to both our services and our SEND population in Cumbria. We have seen our services respond well and demonstrate they can be flexible and innovative in meeting the needs and supporting families. Examples that we would wish to highlight include: establishing a dedicated help line to support hub schools with issues relating to SEND to enable children and young people to access provision, the rapid adaptation of our services for emotional health and wellbeing to move to virtual platforms and provide countywide coverage of 24 hour crisis helplines, as well as many more examples emerging through our case studies of the work of individual teams and practitioners to support families during this challenging period.

- 5.2 Our SEND Improvement Board, working groups and parent/carer reference group have successfully transitioned to virtual platforms and across a range of activity we are exploring how virtual technology can enable us to not only progress with actions that have currently stalled as a result of Covid, but also enable us to reach a wider audience than we may previously have been able to.
- 5.3 We are continuing to strengthen our approach to quality assurance which will support us in demonstrating impact and outcomes. A SEND partnership Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework is now in place and being used to support us to strengthen our approach to auditing, feedback, performance and case studies. We are gathering case studies to highlight the impact and outcomes for young people and families as a result of our interventions and expect to have received 50 by the end of June. A revised approach to the auditing of education health and care plans has recently been launched to secure a wider pool of auditors and tighter tracking of learning points. In partnership with the Council for Disabled Children we will be developing an SEND outcomes framework. We have identified an approach to self-evaluation with the support of our DfE Advisor, and will be progressing this.
- 5.4 We have developed a comprehensive SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which we are using to inform our system understanding of and response to the needs of our SEND population in Cumbria. One example of how we are developing this further is to build on the improved understanding in relation to emotional health and wellbeing by setting up a video conversation between system leaders, service specialists, parents and carers.
- 5.5 We have successfully developed a parent/carer reference group who are core partners in our improvement activity with representatives on all our working groups and the Improvement Board as well as an SEND children and young people's 'All of Us' group. We have delivered a series of engagement events with parents and carers, with our first summary of engagement activity has been completed and providing tangible examples of how we are working as a system with parents and carers to shape our understanding and work with them to improve services. A comprehensive SEND survey has been undertaken, responded to by significant numbers of parents/carers and staff and we are working to ensure the messages and learning from this inform our work going forward. Communications mechanisms including a SEND newsletter and dedicated webpages are in place and a platform to build on for wider engagement.
- 5.6 Some positive development activity has been undertaken with the employment sector in relation to preparation for adulthood for example working towards an inclusive employer mark and a successful Transitions Fayre model developed which is now moving to a virtual platform.
- 5.7 In the arena of SEN Support; improving the support available to those children and young people below the threshold of an EHCP, we have made progress in planning training in relation to speech, language and communication needs to school professionals, developing systems to monitor children on part time timetables and progressing work with SENCO networks.

- 5.8 Regarding emotional health and wellbeing it is important to note the progress that has been made in reducing waiting times for CAMHS services. The working group leading on this thematic area have seen excellent partnership with parents in reviewing and driving this work and are currently working to co-produce a review of patient leaflets and policies to ensure these are appropriate for the SEND cohort. The move to online consultation and support during Covid has been of benefit for some young people particularly those with autism.

## **6.0 KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITY AREAS HIGHLIGHT TO THE BOARD**

- 6.1 Our capacity to progress some of the areas of work outlined in the WSOA has been reduced as a result of redeployment/reprioritisation of work to focus on Covid 19 response as well as social distancing restrictions causing us to pause and re-think the delivery models for some of the actions.
- 6.2 Joint commissioning is an area we would wish to highlight as a risk for the partnership in the drift against some of the activity outlined in the WSOA. We need renewed energy in this area to drive this key priority area forward. Actions impacted where there is slippage against milestones include: the development of a joint commissioning framework, commissioning intentions and associated delivery plan, review of short breaks provision, developing joint service specifications for speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, and work relating to the autism pathway. The working group are reviewing and re-focusing activity to move forward but this is an area where wider system support may be necessary.
- 6.3 At the SEND Improvement Board on 11 May, I highlighted as the Chair my concern about the low numbers of EHCP audits that were being completed. This process has been reviewed and re-launched in June with a wider pool of auditors, as well as the local authority securing some external scrutiny of our EHCPs which reported to our Improvement Board on 29 June. We need to monitor this closely to ensure both the volume of audits continued continues, with a wider pool of partnership auditors and that there is a clear plan to enact the learning from the audits and lead to improvement in our plans.
- 6.4 One of the fundamental transformations required, highlighted by the 2019 inspection is in our relationship with parents and carers. While positive steps have been made, there is concern relating to the capacity to drive this work forward within the existing resource. There is work to do to re-develop our Local Offer for SEND to make this accessible and useful for families, widen our communication and engagement mechanisms, support our staff to understand and deliver tangible co-production, and work to rebuild a functioning Parent/Carer Forum in Cumbria.
- 6.5 While the work, particularly recently, to improve the emotional health and wellbeing of our children and young people with SEND has been positive there have been some important areas of work which have experienced delay as an impact of Covid including the CAMHS Local Transformation Plan, development of mental health support teams in schools, redesign of services relating to learning disability and autism in South Cumbria and the review of the autism diagnostic pathway. There is an imperative for these to be prioritised and progressed by partners to get back on track.

## **7.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 7.1 The SEND Improvement Board will continue to meet regularly, and the next keeping in touch conversation with the DfE/NHSE will take place in July. We need to continue the positive work in re-grouping and re-focusing to achieve the commitments in our Written Statement of Action. We need to ensure the continuing profile, prioritisation and pace of the work to secure the improvements needed in a timeframe that will improve outcomes for the people of Cumbria.

**Linda Clegg**  
**Independent Chair, Cumbria SEND Improvement Board**

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## **APPENDICES**

None

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers.

Contact: Amy Holliman, Senior Manager Partnerships and People Improvement  
[Amy.Holliman@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:Amy.Holliman@cumbria.gov.uk)