



## Improvement Programme Progress Report – January 2021

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides a review of the progress made in implementing the local area Written Statement of Action (WSOA) in response to the findings of the Ofsted/ Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of special educational needs and disability (SEND) which took place in March 2019.
- 1.2 The report also summarises the feedback from the recent formal monitoring visit by the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England (NHSE) in November 2020.
- 1.3 Finally, it provides a view from the recently appointed partnership Strategic Lead for SEND on the required next steps to implement the WSoA in preparation for a revisit inspection.

### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 Cumbria was inspected by Ofsted and the CQC in March 2019 to judge how effectively the SEND reforms had been implemented by the local area, as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The inspection of a local area includes the local authority, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), public health, NHS England for specialist services, early years' settings, schools and further education providers.
- 2.2 The inspection raised concern about the effectiveness of the local area and determined that there were nine areas of significant weakness. The partners in Cumbria were required to produce a WSoA, setting out the immediate priorities for action; the progress on implementing these actions has been, and will continue to be, closely monitored by the DfE and NHSE.
- 2.3 The Cumbria SEND Partnership Improvement Board is responsible for ensuring the delivery of the WSoA and for reporting on progress to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board is led by an independent chair - an experienced DCS and Improvement Lead for the DfE.
- 2.4 The WSoA takes a thematic approach to respond to the findings set out in the letter issued by Ofsted/CQC following the inspection and is supported by six corresponding partnership working groups. These groups meet regularly to progress the work of the partnership and monitor progress; they report every six weeks to the SEND Partnership Improvement Board.

### 3.0 Progress Report

#### 3.1 Implementing the Written Statement of Action



- 3.1.1 Since the approval of the WSoA work to progress the action aimed at securing improvement has been taking place across the partnership.
- 3.1.2 This has included key pieces of work to:
- ✓ Develop a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for SEND (JSNA)
  - ✓ Undertake a 'deep dive' on Emotional Health and Wellbeing and a parent-led review of the support for families dealing with Violent and Challenging Behaviour
  - ✓ Implement an audit process to improve the quality of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP's)
  - ✓ Add NHS numbers to the local authority dataset for children and young people with SEND
  - ✓ Produce a Performance Management Quality Assurance Framework and a comprehensive shared dataset
  - ✓ Co-produce the area Commissioning Intentions and the Speech Language and Communication Therapy service specification
  - ✓ Recommission the 5-19 Public Health Nursing service
  - ✓ Improve the performance monitoring of commissioned services
  - ✓ Support the development of a new Parent Carer Forum
  - ✓ Include parents as part of the improvement process
  - ✓ Improve communication using a regular newsletter, short films and a new Facebook page
  - ✓ Undertake training on co-production and produce a Co-Production Charter, Pledge and Toolkit
  - ✓ Implement an action plan to improve Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in line with national guidance
  - ✓ Improve access to CAMHS services and reduce waiting times
  - ✓ Provide county-wide online counselling, support and advice services for young people
  - ✓ Facilitate access to psychological support for children and young people with complex and life-limiting conditions
  - ✓ Add a further 80 places for Alternative Provision across the county
  - ✓ Embed support for those with SEND within the Early Help process
  - ✓ Deliver governor training events and establish an annual program of SENCO Networks
  - ✓ Produce a SEND Handbook, SEND admission guidance and a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Pathway
  - ✓ Monitor part time timetables
  - ✓ Host a Virtual Preparation for Adulthood Fair with over 200 attendees
  - ✓ Produce a Preparation for Adulthood Route Planner and a film "Talk to Me," about young people's experiences of transition
  - ✓ Review and commission Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) Careers from April 2021, with additional support for young people with SEND
- 3.1.3 This work has improved understanding of local need and enabled senior leaders to hear directly from families about their experiences of the services provided. It has secured greater engagement with families as part of the improvement process and ensured that increasingly this influences the delivery, development and commissioning of services. Supporting guidance has been developed and



training delivered to support operational practice, alongside improving the pathways and access to services which continues to be a priority.

### 3.1.4 Work has also started to:

- ⇒ Develop a visual data dashboard to support performance monitoring
- ⇒ Produce simple JSNA tools to secure wider understanding
- ⇒ Analyse the outcomes from good practice case studies
- ⇒ Co-produce the Occupational Therapy Service and Short Breaks Provision
- ⇒ Simplify access to Personal Budgets
- ⇒ Pilot an 'Always On' feedback mechanism
- ⇒ Improve and re-launch Local Offer website
- ⇒ Lead a *Whole School SEND* project with the National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN) to improve SEND support and train SEND reviewers
- ⇒ Redesign the Continuing Health Care process

## 3.2 DfE/NHSE Monitoring Arrangements

- 3.2.1 As part of the formal monitoring arrangements a review of progress by the DfE/NHSE takes place every six months. Prior to the review a written progress report is submitted by the local area. The most recent review took place on 16 November 2020, with the formal post review letter received on 21 December 2020.
- 3.2.2 The written report described the progress, as outlined in section 3.1.2 above, highlighting those actions delayed, largely due to the impact of the pandemic on staff resources and the changes in practice required to move activity online.
- 3.2.3 The post-review letter from the DfE/NHSE concluded that, as in all local areas, the pandemic has presented challenges for the pace of work or required a change of approach. Where this has occurred, the local area was encouraged to illustrate the operational or implementation changes made as a result.
- 3.2.4 In preparation for the revisit inspection the review undertaken of the nine areas of concern and the statements made in the inspection letter was well received and felt to be helpful in enabling the local area to more clearly link the action being taken with the points made by inspectors.
- 3.2.5 The local area was also advised to ensure that timescales for action, approval and implementation are clearly set out, so that 'sufficient' progress continues to be demonstrated.
- 3.2.6 The next review meeting with the DfE/NHSE is scheduled for 25 March 2021, earlier than the usual six-month period at the request of the local area. At this meeting greater emphasis will be expected



on the impact of the improvement work on children, young people and their families and the consistency of service/provision across the local area.

### **3.3 Next steps to implement the WSoA and prepare for inspection**

- 3.3.1 Ofsted and the CQC will re-visit the Cumbria local area to assess the progress made in addressing the nine areas of significant weakness detailed in the WSoA. This is expected to take place within 18 months of the WSoA being approved; the approval was received on 18 October 2019 and therefore a revisit is expected to take place by 18 April 2021. Arrangements to prepare for the revisit inspection will be led by the SEND Partnership Strategic Lead on behalf of all partners.
- 3.3.2 A review of the local area's progress to implement the WSoA was undertaken by the SEND Partnership Strategic lead in November 2020, as referenced in 3.2.4 above, with feedback provided to senior leaders. This included a summary of the key points in the Ofsted letter, aligned with the nine areas for improvement to illustrate how these judgements were made.
- 3.3.3 A series of questions posed to senior leaders is guiding priorities for action in 2021, with work now taking place in response. This is supported by the development of a draft self-evaluation for SEND which will be considered by the SEND Partnership Improvement Board at their meeting on 1 February 2021.

#### **Report Author**

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