

Report to Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

Monday 21 March 2022

Subject:	Feedback from the SEND Operational and Strategic Boards and the Parent/Carer Forum
Director:	Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarrett
Contact Officers:	Melanie Barnett, Group Head, Children and Education Directorate melanie_barnett@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon:




- The roles and responsibilities of the SEND Operational and Strategic Board
- Partnership Engagement
- Current Challenges and Available Support.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 To provide an overview for members to inform a discussion at the Scrutiny meeting on 21 March 2022.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>By ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That appropriate pathways for support are in place.• That children are ready for school.• That children benefit from a high-quality education.• By ensuring that vulnerable children receive the right support.• We work with partners to develop a multi-agency workforce development plan.
	<p>People live well and age well</p> <p>By ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We support by providing good information, advice and guidance.• We provide opportunities for children in school holidays.• Wellbeing is at the centre of everything we do.• We work with partners and have a joined-up plan.
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p>By ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We make sure our towns become welcoming places for young people and they have jobs, activities and facilities.• Families feel safe in their communities and have the ability to grow healthily and to achieve their ambitions.• We develop our workforce to be trained to support children that require additional support or protection.

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Background Information

Our vision for children and young people in Sandwell with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is that they will be able to:

- Achieve their aspirations for a healthy ordinary life through meaningful employment and fulfilling relationships within the community of their choosing.
- Have choice and control over decisions about their health, education, employment, friendships and relationships.



- Successfully participate in the community and access meaningful occupation, employment and life-long learning opportunities.

To improve provision for all pupils with SEND, as a partnership we are committed to:

- Using the data gathered to address the gaps identified by partners, parents and children/young people.
- Focussing on local resources to enhance the total provision so that children and young people can be supported in or close to the community where they live.
- Ensuring families report that there is a good and appropriate local choice for children and young people in all but the most exceptional cases.
- Further developing the joint commissioning processes and commissioning cycles across agencies at an individual child or young person, service and local area or regional level.
- Reviewing and re-modelling our resources so that they are sufficient to meet current and future needs.
- Ensuring that there is a transparent use and allocation of financial resources.
- Ensuring that we meet our statutory duties by ensuring that the SEND local offer is up to date and is communicated effectively across all partner organisations to raise awareness of the range of services (both commissioned and non-commissioned) that are available within the local area.

Since the introduction of the SEND Reforms in 2014, the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) has nearly doubled. Sandwell Local Authority, currently maintain over 2700 EHCP's and this number continues to grow. If the current growth in population continues we predict that there could be an estimated 3500 children or young people, in Sandwell, with an EHCP by 2025. It is important to add that this increase is also being seen nationally.

4.2 Governance

4.3 SEND Operational Board

The SEND Operational Board meets monthly. The meeting is chaired by the Group Head for Inclusive Learning Services. The purpose of the



Operational Board is to:

- Improve the understanding of the SEND population and recent trends in Sandwell.
- To develop a plan and implement a coordinated programme of change which is based around Quality Assurance, Improving Provision, Improving Progress and Attainment and Workforce Development.

This will be achieved by:

- Meaningful engagement and consultation with parents and carers.
- Active participation of children and young people.
- Joint commissioning of services.
- Early integrated assessments and plans.
- A clear local offer of services and support for parents, children and young people.
- Having clear transition and progression arrangements to help our young people prepare for adulthood from the earliest years.
- The identification of workforce development needs.

The Board has responsibility for the delivery of the SEND Development Plan. Each board member is held to account for the delivery of the objectives, actions and outcomes identified in the development plan. The Board is accountable to the SEND Strategic Board.

4.4 SEND Strategic Board

The SEND Strategic Board meets bi-monthly. The meeting is chaired by the Director of Children and Education. The primary purpose of the strategic board is to ensure the delivery of the SEND Strategy and the associated action plan.

4.5 Partnership

The SEND Operational Board is made up of the following partnership members:

- Local Authority Education and Employment staff i.e. Inclusive Learning, Connexions, Employment, Virtual School and SEND Advisor.



- Local Authority Commissioning and Operational Staff from the Young Adults team.
- Sandwell Childrens Trust Operational, Youth Offending and Commissioning staff.
- School Staff from Special Schools and Focus Provisions.
- Health Staff i.e. School Nursing, CAMHS, Therapies Team and the Designated Clinical Officer.
- Parent/Carer representative.
- SENDIASS Coordinator.
- Senior Enterprise Manager from the Black Country Consortium.

The SEND Strategic Board is made up of the following partnership members:

- Director of Children and Education.
- Designated Medical Officer.
- Group Heads Inclusive Learning Services.
- Sandwell Children’s Trust – SEND Strategic Lead.
- Head Teachers of Special Schools in Sandwell.
- Parent/Carer Representative.
- Assistant Director of Adult Social Care.
- Principal Educational Psychologist.
- Public Health Consultant.
- Children and Education Strategic Partnership Commissioning Manager.
- Employment and Skills Service Manager.
- NHS Commissioner.
- Children’s Centre Services Manager.

The partnership is responsible for co-producing, planning, implementing and producing the self-evaluation framework and subsequent SEND Operational Board Development Plan, and ensuring that the pace of change will deliver the improvements identified. The priorities areas for development are:

- **Quality Assurance of Statutory responsibilities:**

Ensure that a multi-service integrated approach is used when working with children/ young people and their families to identify their needs and aspirational outcomes and provide the support required within a timely manner.



- **Workforce Development:** To ensure that we have a well-led and properly supported multi-agency workforce development programme so that the whole workforce have the knowledge and skills to support children and young people with SEND to reach their potential and realise their ambitions.
- **Improving Provision:** To promote alignment, collaboration and creative solutions across all services in the Local Area to make best use of available resources so that children and young people can be supported locally to achieve their aspirations.
- **Improving Progress and Attainment:** To identify and address key improvements in Sandwell that will help ensure children and young people are able to achieve their best possible educational outcomes leading to meaningful occupation, employment and life-long learning opportunities.

4.6 Parent / Carer Forum

Sandwell Parents Voices United was formed in January 2021. The forum is an independent group of parents and carers working together to raise awareness of, and improve outcomes, for children and young people with SEND in Sandwell. A representative from the forum attends the SEND Strategic and Operational Board meetings. The group is composed of several steering group members who are part of four individual teams which focus on administration, parent events, marketing and networking and social media.

The group are very active with partners and have had recent involvement in a number of areas of work including:

- The Local Offer.
- Send Transport.
- Liberty Protection Safeguards.
- Supported Internships.
- Preparing for Adulthood.
- Quality Assurance.



4.7 Current Challenges

In September 2019, the Government announced that a review of the support for Children with Special Educational Needs would be undertaken. The review aims are to improve the services available to families who need support, equip staff in schools and colleges to respond effectively to their needs. Due to the COVID pandemic the review findings have been delayed and at the time of writing the review has not been published. The current national challenges relating to the SEND system are well documents. The reminder of this section will summarise some of the local challenges.

- Sandwell is experiencing a significant strategic challenge due to an increase in demand on the SEND system which (amongst other issues) is affecting the availability of provision. The Local Authority is also experiencing an increase in requests for placement changes which is partially driven by the impact of covid on children and young people.
- The Local Authority is also experiencing increased referrals to inclusion support, from 250 referrals pre-covid to 660 referrals in the comparable time this year. Request for needs assessments have doubled and the number of needs assessment decisions has increased from 2,412 in 2021 to 2,752 January 2022.
- There has been an increase in the number of children moving into the Sandwell area who require a specialist service and provision.
- With the rise in population of students with SEND and increased need, some mainstream schools are struggling to meet the needs of the children.
- There is a lack of capacity within special schools / specialist settings.
- Due to the above increased pressures there is a significant impact on being able to meet the demand because of staff capacity.
- The Local Authority is increasingly having to access places from independent special schools. The independent sector can demand large funding requests which impacts negatively on the Local Authority budget.
- High Needs Funding is provided to local authorities through the High Needs Block (HNB) of the dedicated schools grant (DSG). The High Needs Block will balance at the end of this financial year (2021/22) but is likely to be in an increasing deficit position in the following years. The



Director of Children and Education is raising this point with the DFE policy team.

4.8 Available Support

In May 2021 the government published a study that estimated that around 1.4 million pupils in English schools have an identified special educational need (SEN). Four broad areas of need are identified in the SEND code of practice:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical needs

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to develop a local offer and publish it on the website. This is to ensure that clear, comprehensive, accessible and up to date information about available provision and how to access it is provided. It also must make sure that the provision responds to local needs and aspirations.

The Sandwell Local Offer provides information for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their parents or carers in a single place. It shows families what they can expect from a range of local agencies including education, health and social care. The Local Offer provides information that is needed to make informed choices about services. This includes information regarding what to do if you think your child has special educational needs and /or a disability.

Please also refer to 4.3 which provides detail of the Sandwell SEND Strategy.



5 Implications

Resources:	<p>Details have been included within the report relating to the High Needs Block and the future funding implications given the continual increase in demand. As a result, there are implications for staffing i.e. the ability to manage expectations and the demands being placed on services in meeting our statutory responsibilities and ensuring the very best possible outcomes for all children and young people.</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>The SEND Code of Practice contains details of legal requirements that must be followed without exception and statutory guidance that must be followed by law unless there's a good reason not to.</p> <p>It also explains the duties of local authorities, health bodies, schools and colleges to provide for those with special educational needs under part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014.</p>
Risk:	<p>The risks relate predominantly to demand, provision and the associated financial implications. These areas are monitored and reviewed by the SEND Strategic Board and Schools Forum.</p>
Equality:	<p>Equality Act 2010 and SEND Regulations. Under the Equality Act, schools are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' so that all children can access their facilities and services. The SEND Code of Practice 2015 makes it clear in both the introduction and in chapter one, that education providers have a statutory duty to implement the Equality Act 2010 alongside the children and Families Act Part 3.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>There are no proposals relating to health and wellbeing within the report however it should be recognised that poor wellbeing or social and emotional health difficulties can be impacted by a child or young person's SEND.</p>
Social Value	<p>Community – Improving life's by creating aspirational and resilient communities.</p> <p>Wellbeing – Improving the lived experience of children and young people within the communities that they live.</p>



	<p>Inequalities – Challenging inequalities.</p> <p>Opportunities – Ensuring that Young people have opportunities to spend time with their peers outside of school and college. They are supported to develop and maintain friendships and relationships. They can access their community and feel safe and confident.</p> <p>Employment – Developing opportunities for work experience and employment.</p>
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6 Appendices

There are no appendices with this report.

7. Background Papers

Please see below sources of information and links:

Sandwell Local Offer - [Sandwell Local Offer | Family Information Service Hub](#)

SEND Strategy - [sandwell_send_strategy_2021-2024_final.pdf](#)
([openobjects.com](#))

Special Provision Plan June 2021- [special_provision_plan_june_2021.pdf](#)
([openobjects.com](#))

Sandwell Parent Voices United - [Sandwell Parents Voices United](#)
([squarespace.com](#))

Supporting SEND - [Supporting SEND - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Review into support for Children with Special Educational Needs - [MAJOR REVIEW INTO SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

SEND Code of Practice - [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

