

Areas of significant weakness

Three main areas of significant weakness:

Joint commissioning;

Over-identification of MLD;

Quality of EHCPs.

Over- identification of moderate learning difficulties (MLD)

- *The reasons for, and accuracy of, the high proportions of children and young people identified with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) are yet to be resolved.*
- *Potential over-identification could mask underlying difficulties in communication and language, and social, emotional and mental health development.*

Progress and next steps:

- Data gathered down to school level showing identification of need at SEN support and EHCP and compared to national average; particular focus on over identification of MLD and under identification of SLCN or SEMH
- Training delivered on identification of need to all Inclusion Partners and Educational Psychologists;
- Quadrant discussions and data analysis which subsequently are informing this term's strategic planning meetings (SPM) with schools;
- Outcomes of the SPMs will be shared and discussed and quadrant and county level to inform training needs etc.
- Training will be delivered to schools and settings to improve accurate assessment of need

Challenges

- Delayed impact – we won't see data until the outputs from the 2021 SEN2 return (late Spring 2021);
- A simple data fix may just shift the issue and not address fundamental issues around accurate identification of need;
- A greater awareness and identification of speech and language will have a commissioning implication;
- Parental recognition of impact will be difficult – they may not see identification of MLD as a problem and some may not be aware of the 'label' at all.

Joint commissioning

- *The joint commissioning arrangements between the local authority and the CCGs do not work well enough to provide children and young people with the services that they need.*
- *Too much variation between the CCGs leads to inequality, inconsistency and unacceptably long waiting times for services.*
- *Joint commissioning is not sufficiently informed by what is already known about the gaps in services for health and education across the 0–25 age range, across the whole local area.*

Progress and next steps:

- Over-arching joint commissioning group led by NE CCG established;
- All parties and parents well represented;
- Additional capacity from health;
- Individual workstreams:
 - SENDIASS and parent carer forum (parental advice, support, participation and voice);
 - Equipment;
 - Therapies (OT, PT and SALT);
 - Assessment pathways (autism and ADHD).
 - Local Offer

Challenges

- Timescales are tight and mobilisation is significant across a number of workstreams;
- Impact for children, young people and parents vs the commissioners will be difficult;
- Differences between CCGs are still apparent – therapies in particular;
- CCGs still dependent on ‘clunky’ governance and decision making – not agile enough;
- At some point we will hit the big issues around finance.

Quality of EHCPs

- *The EHC plans do not consistently secure the right professional advice to meet children's and young people's needs, and do not have specific details of the provision that will be put in place.*
- *Strategic oversight is not effective in making sure that EHC plans are fit for purpose.*
- *Too many **EHC plans do not include the information needed** to secure high-quality outcomes for children and young people.*

Progress and next steps:

- Isos commissioned to lead comprehensive review of Essex's arrangements for SEN assessment and planning;
- Multi-agency core group across Education, C+F and health;
- Focus on decision making for assessment and issuing of plans; **Health and social care services' role in decisions around assessments, plans, reviews; Moderation and quality-assurance of plans, planning, outcomes; annual reviews and ceasing plans.**
- Wider group bringing in schools and settings and parents for testing progress;
- Parallel co-production group with Essex Family Forum focussed on thresholds for assessment, quality of offer for SEN support and communication with parents

Challenges

- Implementation of the recommendations;
- Ensuring consistency across four quadrants;
- Ownership of the solutions rather than depending upon Isos;
- Time to demonstrate impact and shift culture – internally (our teams) and externally (parents and schools).

Other issues to address:

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- Contribution of Social Care leaders and professionals to delivery and evaluation of the improvements;
 - Role of education settings and schools in the improvement journey;
 - Need to demonstrate effective leadership across the local area;
 - Ensuring that we capture parental and pupil voice effectively – working beyond the Essex Family Forum;
 - Governance arrangements;
 - The Local Offer – how do we ensure that parents are informed effectively. Role of SEND Navigation.

Ofsted interim area SEND visits

Understand impact of pandemic on SEND system and for children, young people and families;

What has worked well and what have been the challenges;

Identify opportunities for improvement;

Highlight positive case studies and impact.

For Essex: a chance to see what progress we have made against the WSOA.