

REPORT TO: Children, Young, People's & Families Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 15th July 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director, Children's Services

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People & Families

SUBJECT: SEND Improvement Plan Update

WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To assure the board of the progress today against the targets set out in the Area Priority Action Plan, following the SEND Area Inspection, November 2023. To provide a update of progress in improvement work following receipt of the Delivering Better Value Grant. (Note: this report should be read in conjunction with the SEND Priority Action Plan, the Priority Action Plan Risk Register and the Delivering Better Value Grant Application).

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted**

3.0 **SEND Area Inspection and Priority Action Plan**

3.1 In November 2023, Halton SEND Local Area Partnership were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC); the purpose - to evaluate the effectiveness of the area's partnership SEND arrangements in improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The Inspection found widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND.) As a result of this inspection, His Majesty's Chief Inspector required the local area partnership to prepare and submit a priority action plan (area SEND). The priority action plan was developed in partnership with stakeholders from across the area, and was subsequently approved by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.

3.2 The inspectorate identified 5 priority areas for improvement:

- 1- Leaders at Halton local authority and the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB should cooperate at pace to improve the shared strategic oversight, governance, support and challenge to drive improvements to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Halton.

- 2- Leaders in the local authority, ICB and education, health and social care providers should improve the efficiency and quality of their information gathering and sharing processes to ensure that children's and young people's needs are understood accurately and met more swiftly and effectively through coordinated approaches.
- 3- Leaders across education, health and social care should improve the joint commissioning of services to ensure that children, young people and their families receive sufficient support to have their needs met effectively.
- 4- Leaders across education, health and social care should urgently improve the early identification of needs and access to specialist health pathways, including the neurodevelopmental assessment pathway and speech and language therapy and the support available, while children and young people wait.
- 5- Leaders across education, health and social care should improve the timeliness of new EHC plans and updates to EHC plans following the annual review process, so that, if appropriate, children and young people receive an effective EHC plan within statutory timescales.

3.3 The purpose of this report is to update the board on progress against all 5 areas of the Priority Action Plan, to set out the current risks to delivery and the control measures in place to mitigate the risks.

3.4 **Overall Priority Action Plan Progress across** the entire action plan. 17% of all actions are marked as complete with a further 51% on target to be completed by identified timeframe. 30% of actions are marked as delayed, but notably no actions are identified as significantly delayed or not expected to meet target. 2% of targets are noted to be not started, however those actions are held within action areas with a large number of actions and are dependent on the completion of other actions. It should be noted that the action relating to the parent and carer survey sits across each area of the priority action. This action is noted to be delayed across all Priority Action Areas, due to a direction from the SEND Strategic Improvement Board to take the additional time needed to complete the survey in a co-produced manner and effectively with partners- specifically the Parent Carer Survey. This has delayed actions across all priority action areas. The survey is now live, with an closing date of 30th June. When the survey closes, all related actions will shift from delayed to complete.

3.5 **Priority 1-** Priority Action 1 has now completed 44% of its action points. However 44% of the actions are delayed. It is encouraging that 55% of the actions are either completed or on target and that there is reportable progress on all actions points . No delays have caused completion dates to be missed as yet, aside from the delays

to the Parent/ Carer Survey. Once the survey closes at the end of June, the related actions will shift from “delayed” to “complete”.



3.6 **Priority 1 Risks** – The Senior Responsible Officer for Priority 1 has identified 2 significant risks:

- 1- Failure to have an Integrated SEND Performance and Business intelligence Dashboard in place demonstrates the inability of Senior Leaders to assess delivery of strategic vision, objectives and outcomes for children and young people.

The following Control measures are in place to mitigate the impact of this risk:

- i. A Working Group has now been established
 - ii. Meetings have been diarised
 - iii. A separate Senior Responsible Officer has been identified and appointed.
 - iv. A long list of Key Performance Indicators have now been developed and the first draft of the Dashboard was presented to the SEND Strategic Board on 20th June 2024. A further action was agreed for a small working group to be established to narrow down the data points to between 25-30, to enable effective and efficient oversight of performance.
- 2- Timescales are now short to have an Alternative Provision(AP) Strategy drafted, approved by the Strategic Improvement Board and in place for implementation for September 2024. Failure to progress at pace could result in no AP Strategy in place for September 2024, potentially leaving some children and young people vulnerable to potentially avoidable suspension or permanent exclusion.

Control Measures are in place to mitigate the impact of this risk:

- i. DCS agreement to commission external

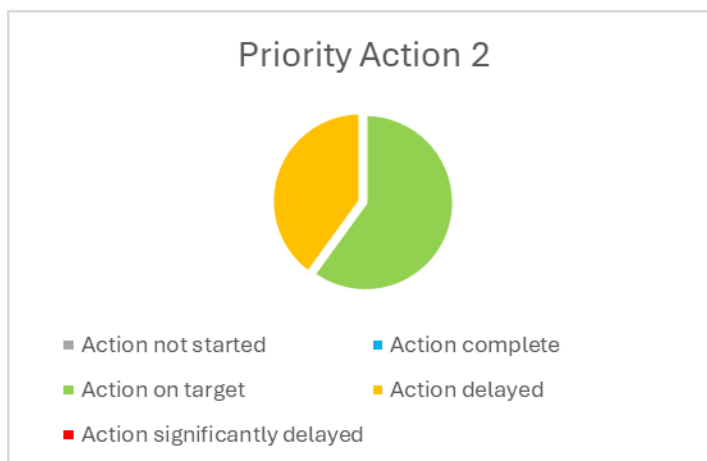
consultant to undertake at pace review of AP and draft an AP Strategy

- ii. An approach has been made to Paul Brennan, former DCS and Education Consultant, who has agreed to consider if he may complete this workstream for September. A further meeting between Paul Brennan and Charlotte Finch has been agreed for 2nd July to confirm arrangements.
- iii. A further risk to delivery has emerged in the progress of appointing the SEND programme Manager. This is a key post to drive forward progress across all priorities in the action plan. The Job Descriptions and Person Specification has been coproduced by colleagues from Health and Education and submitted for Evaluation. Halton HR have given assurances that the evaluation process will commence week beginning 1st July. A request has been submitted for the job evaluation to be expedited.

3.7 **Priority 2 Action Updates**

60% of Priority 2's action points are on target. 40% are delayed. No actions are yet complete. However, there is reportable progress on all actions points and no delays have caused completion dates to be missed as yet.

Note: *Paper regarding local offer delayed due to the IILACs inspection. Assurance have been given that this paper has been prioritised for completion.*

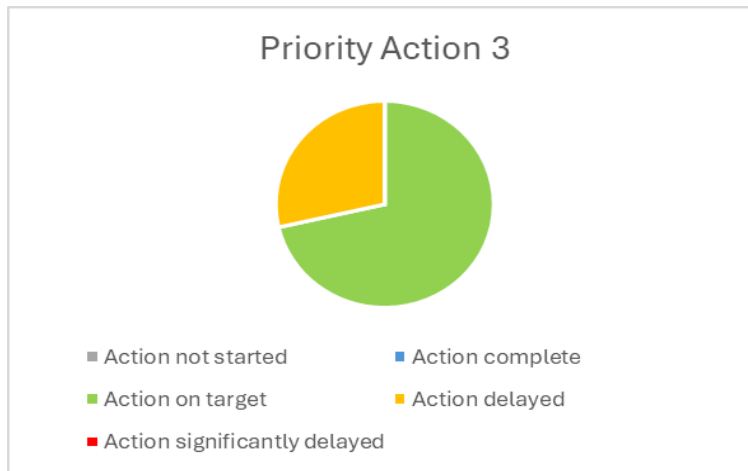


3.8 **Priority 2 Risks**

No risks have been Identified in Priority 2.

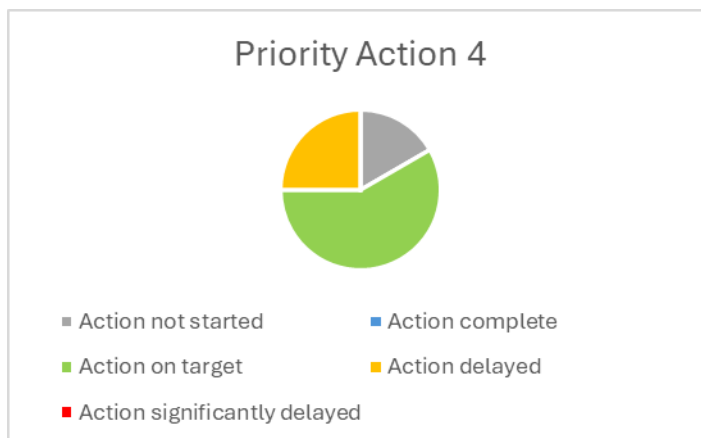
3.9 **Priority 3 Updates**

In Priority 3, 71% of actions points are on target, whilst 29% of actions are delayed. No actions are yet complete. However, there is reportable progress on all actions points and no delays have caused completion dates to be missed as yet.



3.10 **Priority 3 Risks**
No risks have been Identified.

3.11 **Priority 4 Action Updates**
In Priority 4, 58% of actions points are on target, whilst 25% of actions are delayed and may miss completion date. No actions are yet complete and 17% are not yet started (although this does not mean they are delayed) There is reportable progress on the majority of actions points . No delays have caused completion dates to be missed as yet. Priority 4 has a high number of action points, so it is reasonable to expect later commencement dates for some of these actions.



3.12 **Priority 4 Risks**
No risks have been identified.

3.13 **Priority 5 Update**

In Priority 5, 22% of actions are now complete. 40% of actions points are on target, whilst 15% of actions are delayed. 23% of actions are not yet started (although this does not mean they are delayed) There is reportable progress on the majority of actions points and no delays have caused completion dates to be missed as yet. As with Priority 4, Priority 5 has a high number of action points, so it is reasonable to expect later commencement dates for some of these actions.



3.14 **Priority 5 Risks**

The Senior Responsible Officer for Priority 5 has identified 1 risk, that being "General capacity" which is creating some delay in meeting time scales.

3.15 Control measures are in place for this risk are the ongoing appointment of the SEND programme Lead. However, delays in the recruitment process are exacerbating this issue. As stated above, it is hoped that this recruitment exercise can be completed without further delay, adding much needed capacity into the Improvement Workforce.

General Risks Identified- with control measures.

- 1- The recent ILACs inspection, and any consequent work required, may create tension in priorities from officers working across Children's Services. The appointment of the Designated Social Care Officer should ensure that SEND Improvement work stays high on the improvement agenda.
- 2- Joint working across all SEND Services remains inconsistent. Steps have been taken to strengthen partnership working across all areas and Halton LA have secured time from Consultant Deborah Glassbrook, former Executive Director at Reading Borough Council, but now a highly regarded

professional coach and mentor. Deborah has offered two dates in October for a facilitated SEND session, intended to cement best working partnership practices. These are Tuesday 22nd & Wednesday 23rd October.

4.0 **Delivering Better Value – Update**

4.1 Delivering Better Value (DBV) is a Department for Education programme working to identify and implement local opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND across 54 LAs, and aid local systems (alongside existing local and other DfE programmes) in their objective of achieving financial sustainability. Halton was identified as eligible to apply for DBV grant funding and subsequently a grant application was submitted on the 20th December 2023. Halton requested £1m of grant funding, primarily to build resilience across all educational systems to support and include learners with Social, Emotional Mental Health Needs. The initiatives outlined in our bid are designed to allow schools and settings to support SEND children effectively, without necessarily having to request an Education Health and Care assessment, alleviating the demand for specialist placements, and reducing both the risk of out of borough placement and permanent exclusions. We were notified in March that our bid was successful and that we had been awarded the full £1m grant. This additional resource presents a significant opportunity to positively transform inclusive practices across Halton.

4.2 **Workstream plan & use of grant money**

The grant has been split into two workstreams:

1. Behaviour Support Change Programme: £690,000 – staffing, comms, resource, training and evaluation
2. Inclusion Framework: £310,000 – staffing, comms, resource and training

4.3 **Workstream 1** – Behaviour Support Change Programme Objective: reduction in escalating Social and Emotional Health needs across settings, fewer requests for statutory assessment, fewer EHCPs, improved attendance, fewer exclusions, fewer Maintained Special School(MSS) placements, fewer Independent Non-Maintained Special School(INMSS) placements.

Objective: Children with a wide range of special needs to be included within mainstream settings, without recourse to statutory assessment or movement into MSS. Reduce exclusion, reduce the number of requests for statutory assessment of Education Health and Care(EHC) needs and the need for MSS and INMSS placements. Inclusive practice celebrated visibly and greater support made available across settings.

- 4.4 **Workstream 2** - Inclusion Framework Objective: Children with a wide range for special needs to be included within mainstream settings, without recourse to statutory assessment or movement into. MSS. Reduce exclusion, reduce the number of requests for statutory assessment of SEND and the need for MSS and NMSS placements. Inclusive practice celebrated visibly and greater support made available across settings.

Approach: Implementation of a borough-wide Inclusion programme to promote and recognise excellent inclusive practice across all age ranges - with a specific focus on EYFSS and primary SLCN and CI learners.

- 4.5 Mike Stapleton-Chambers was appointed as programme lead on 10th June 2024

- 4.6 Work has begun on implementing Workstream 1. £300,000 has been spent on 'Thrive'. Thrive will offer a trauma-informed, whole school or setting approach that helps to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. This will be provided with training, resources and an award-winning online tool, so school based staff can better understand the needs of their pupils and provide targeted, effective support where it's needed. This will be offered to all settings within Halton and funded for two years via the grant.

- 4.7 Roll out has been swift with schools already starting the training. 17 delegates from 11 Halton Schools have taken up Thrive Licensed Childhood Practitioner Training which started on 14th June 2024. The schools are:

- Murdishaw West Primary School
- Oakfield Community Primary School
- Lunt's Heath Primary School
- Gorsewood Primary School
- St Bede's Catholic Junior School
- Moore Primary School
- St Clements Catholic Primary
- Victoria Road Primary School
- Brookfields Special School

- St Martins Catholic Primary
- The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary

Further training starts on 25th June 2024 we have 5 confirmed delegates from the following schools:

- Sandymoor Ormiston Academy
- Ashley Special High School
- Ormiston Bolingbroke
- The Brow Community Primary school
- St Mary's CofE Primary School

4.8 Exploration on other elements of the program have started. Costings and timelines for implementation are being considered in co-production with school settings and other Halton officers.

5.0 **Policy Implications**

5.1 The SEND Priority Action Plan mandates the production of 4 new or revised strategies: SEND Strategy 2025-2030, Alternative Provision Strategy, SEND Sufficiency Strategy and the Waiting Well Strategy. All documents will be published within the 18 month delivery schedule of the Priority Action Plan.

6.0 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

6.1 Priority Action 5 contains actions relating to Preparation for Adulthood and Transitions. The intention of these actions is to strengthen our approach and strategy towards learners in this phase, ensuring we are preparing pathways and opportunities well in advance of them reaching adulthood.

7.0 **A Healthy Halton**

7.1 The Priority Plan was coproduced with colleagues from health and has a heavy emphasis on waiting times for therapeutic services and diagnostic pathways.

8.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

8.1 Both the Priority Action Plan and the Delivering Better Value workstream, maintain a Risk Register which identifies risk early, and take recovery action at the earliest possible opportunity. The Priority Action Plan Risk Register is appended to this report.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The recommendations of this report support the Council's response to the environment and climate emergency e.g. by promoting energy efficiency; limiting/eliminating fossil fuel use for heat, power and transport; limiting/eliminating waste and encouraging re-use of resources and encouraging procurement of local suppliers.

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

'None under the meaning of the Act.'

<https://haltongovuk.sharepoint.com/:x/s/SENDInspection/EdjVKnG0SBCmGnZ2dTYXaYBulhjOI4a4tlZvPutDzLsuA?e=GGxRrn>