

SEND Improvement Update



Newsletter Highlights

- Termly update on SEND progress
- DfE Commissioner appointed
- New plan for Birmingham SEND
- Together We CAN
- Full details on all progress made

Update on Progress since the May 2021 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Revisit undertaken by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Birmingham City Council and the CCG take the findings of the Local Area (Council and NHS) revisit extremely seriously and are working to make immediate and long term improvements. In order to keep you up to date with those we are **producing regular termly updates on progress** made to improve our services for children and young people with SEND.

In these updates we will commit to giving:

- A transparent update on progress that has been made as well as on areas where we have not made as much progress as we might have liked
- A 'You Said, We Did' update that gives an update on feedback we have received and what we have done about it
- Information on priorities for the next term
- Information on opportunities for co-production or feedback so that we can hear from children and young people, families, schools and other stakeholders

*There is more detailed information on the progress that the Local Area has made following earlier family feedback further in the document.



OCTOBER 2021

Inspection Revisit and Immediate Next Steps

The Inspection Revisit took place in May 2021 and identified that insufficient progress had been made by the local area in all but one of the thirteen areas of weakness identified. As a result of the findings of the May 2021 revisit, the Department for Education (DfE) have appointed a Commissioner to hold the local area to account in the required SEND improvements.

As a result of the revisit, the Department for Education (DfE) has appointed a Commissioner, **John Coughlan CBE**, to hold the Local Area to account to deliver the required improvements.

John is a well-respected and experienced Director of Children's Services, former Council Chief Executive and a respected Commissioner. He knows Birmingham well, having spent some of his childhood and part of his early career here and plans to be in the City as much as possible. We met with John on September 14th; first task is to write a report for the Education Minister which will consider the Council's ability to ensure that SEND services will improve – this must be completed by 31st December.

Accelerated Programme Plan – how we are going to improve the service

The DfE, in conjunction with NHS England, have also requested that the Local Area, in conjunction with parents and carers, prepare an **Accelerated Progress Plan (APP)**, which will have to demonstrate how the local area will resolve the 12 outstanding areas of significant weakness identified in the original inspection in 2018.

The APP will have clear targets and milestones and will be regularly monitored and approved by the SEND Improvement Board (make up and chair to be announced shortly) in order to ensure that it is improving the experience of children, young people and their families and improving outcomes.



An advertisement for the Birmingham Local Offer website. It features a young child with colorful handprints on their hands. The text asks, 'Are you concerned that your child has Special Educational Needs or a Disability?'. Below this, it states 'The Birmingham Local Offer website provides help and support for your family' and provides the URL 'www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk'. At the bottom, there are logos for Birmingham Children's Partnership, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Children's Trust, and NHS, along with small images of diverse families and children.

Together We Can - new programme title

Following feedback from the SEND Youth forum/RISE Youth Forum - who do not feel the term SEND represents them, they have asked that we join their campaign to replace it with Children with Additional Needs (CAN).

The partnership has agreed to this and we will begin to use CAN in all appropriate situations. We will continue to use SEND where it is currently required under the Code of Practice.

We have heard the strong message from parents and carers 'Nothing About Us Without Us' and will commit to ensuring parent and child voice is heard, valued and informs our work. It is a priority that we work together to deliver our commitment to co-production and to ensure that the voices of children and young people and their families is at the heart of all we do – Together We CAN.



***The following summarises the progress that the Local Area has made following previous family feedback:**

Since May 2021, the Local Authority has been working on improving the Special Educational Needs Assessments and Review Service (SENAR). In September 2021, we asked families what the most important improvements they would like to see were. From what families fed back, we did:

You Said	We Did/ Are Doing
Improve communication: answer calls and emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We have appointed a Head of SENAR Operations to work alongside the current Head of Service to transform the SENAR service, by improving processes, increasing the service capacity and working more closely with families and professionals. ▪ We have received significant investment from Cabinet in July, which means that we are able to hire more people to work in the SEND Service and carry out vital casework. We are currently recruiting for several case workers and senior case workers to ensure that all young people are assigned their own officer. We are carrying a high number of vacancies at present, so we are recruiting both internally and externally to cover this. ▪ We are working on a comprehensive accurate communication plan to all young people, families and schools so you know who to contact and where to go. We will publish this information as soon as it is finalised. ▪ We are reducing the number of contact points into the service by closing unnecessary email accounts and aligning the new contact points to our communications strategy ▪ We have realigned all the interim staff to permanent senior case officers and team managers.
We need a named, accessible plan co-ordinator for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We have moved the SENAR team back into locality teams – North, South, East & West – with a clear management structure in each team. The area teams have been allocated schools and young people dependent upon postcodes. This will ensure that there is ownership of cases within the service. We will communicate this to families and education settings soon. ▪ We have aligned our Parent Link service alongside our resolutions team to provide further support to parents and young people when they have an issue – we are looking at how parents can use the service to find resolutions to their issues as quickly as possible. ▪ We have realigned our business support structure to facilitate better support to the service and we are in the process of recruiting for support staff.
Professionals need better data, so that errors happen less frequent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We are reviewing the case management system (NEXUS) to establish new more streamlined processes. A project is underway to tackle this. This will also include a parent portal and schools' portal. More information will be shared in our next update on dates for these.
Ensure that there is timely and appropriate provision and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We are working through the internal processes around reviews and assessment to ensure that we streamline the work to help us achieve 100% compliance with the timelines set in the SEND Code of Practice and have a more positive outcome for families and young people. ▪ We are developing our decision-making process to ensure consistency of outcomes are managed by professionals and experts within the SEND arena – working in partnership with Health & Social Care. Giving autonomy for smaller decisions back to the senior case workers who know the young person rather than everything being held up in a multi-agency panel.
We need coproduced fit for purpose EHCP plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We have recruited an expert in the SEND Code of Practice to ensure that all staff are acting within the guidelines set within the code – this officer is building a comprehensive training programme for all current officers alongside an induction programme for all new starters.

Health (CCG) Progress Update

In Birmingham Healthcare services work together, alongside their partners to best support Children, Young People/Adults and their families and improve Health services across the City. From what families fed back, we did:

You Said	We Did/ Are Doing
Waiting lists are too long for Community Therapy services and Autism Assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extra resources have been used to support with reducing all waiting lists ▪ Transformation work is taking place to support Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) services ▪ There is active involvement in progressing a whole system autism pathway ▪ Services are using virtual ways of assessing for autism and offering therapy appointments ▪ Trialling a faster way of completing assessments for autism for children under 7yrs ▪ Services are completing reviews of the children on the autism waiting lists ▪ All waiting lists are regularly monitored to try and make sure the plans are working ▪ The average waiting times for Speech and Language Therapies initial assessments have reduced from 24.1 weeks (March 2021) to 7.6 weeks (August 2021). ▪ The maximum waiting times for Speech and Language Therapies intervention have reduced from 128 weeks (March 2021) to 95 weeks (August 2021).
What support is available for families that are waiting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advice lines are available for families whilst on the waiting list for all therapy services ▪ Information advice and guidance is available online ▪ Linking with the iKnow project to make intervention / support packages available for families during their wait (link with Birmingham university) ▪ https://www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/childrens-healthcare/services/
We need better access to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) support services. We need more support post diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Pre-Post Autism Diagnosis support offer is in development ▪ Health are working with the Communication and Autism Team (CAT) and a few mainstream primary schools in the city to pilot 'Autism in schools project'
Out of hours support for Mental Health crisis does not always meet the needs of Children and Young People with Learning Disabilities and Autism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB) offer 24/7 Mental Health crisis support to 0-25 year olds in Birmingham ▪ They are currently reviewing how their out of hours Crisis provision supports people with Autism and Learning Disabilities ▪ Work is happening with partner agencies to ensure that all children and young people are supported well at the right time by staff who have the right knowledge and expertise ▪ During weekday hours (9-5) FTB teams have duty lines. 0300 300 0099
Invest more in MH support for parents and children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investment in Mental Health Services has taken place and is ongoing ▪ NHS, voluntary and other services are working together to make sure investment leads to better outcomes for children, young people and adults in Birmingham and Solihull
What is the update on health appointments and social distancing guidance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most Health providers in Birmingham are offering a mix of face to face and virtual or telephone appointments ▪ The type of appointment offered to a child or young person and their family is typically based clinical need, whether it is possible for it to be virtual and if it is safe for it to be face to face.

How much is virtual now and what can parents expect?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Many providers still have a one visitor/parent/carer policy for appointments however; if this is not suitable it is often possible to request for others to attend by getting in touch ahead of time.
--	---

Birmingham Children's Trust Progress Update

Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT) have invited the Local Authority and Health partners into the SEND Early Help hub, that is being established and want to deliver early November – this is where professionals can sign post families, offer EHCP advice and the help with navigating the local offer.

Also, please follow the link <https://vimeo.com/600112846/645c6b4225> to hear a podcast from Alison Montgomery, Assistant Director – Disabilities, on the redesign of the Disabled Children's Service.

How Can You Feed in Your Views?

If you would like to comment on any of the above, please complete this survey monkey below. We very much want to hear from you.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/XLLCWLW>

The next Update will be published in January 2022.