

SEND Improvement Update



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 with our Accelerated Progress Plan. 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 opportunities for co-production or feedback so that we can hear from children and young people, families, schools and other stakeholders
- The service is now also producing a monthly SENAR update which can be found on the SEND Local Offer news page - www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/latest-news

Newsletter Highlights

Termly update on SEND progress

The improvement plan for Birmingham SEND

It's been good to meet you....

The SEND Local Offer website - help and support for all

You Said, We Did or Are Doing...



MARCH 2022

It's been good to meet you....

The SEND Transformation team has been on the road in the last 6 months, meeting families in schools, community centres, meeting spaces in the City Centre and online. The team has been talking to families about their experiences of the SEND partnership service, co-production and the SEND Local Offer website.

700 people signed up to join in these discussions and we have been pleased that approximately 100 people managed to make the events and generously share their experiences.

We have heard lots from families and carers and we will be taking the feedback and using it to help us continue to improve services and produce our co-production charter.

You can always leave your feedback on the homepage of the SEND Local Offer website - www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk



Birmingham Children's Partnership | Birmingham City Council

Are you concerned that your child has Special Educational Needs or a Disability?

The Birmingham Local Offer website provides help and support for your family
www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk

Birmingham Children's Trust | NHS

The SEND Local Offer website - help & support for families

The SEND Local Offer website is a 'one stop shop' for all things SEND in Birmingham. It is packed with resources, information, advice, downloads, support and specialist SEND groups, as well as webinars, parent event opportunities and support for professionals.

Following feedback we have renamed the site the SEND Local Offer website, so that families are clearer about what it can offer.

Have a look around and tell us what you think via the homepage Feedback area..... www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk

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

The DfE, in conjunction with NHS England, requested that the Local Area, in conjunction with parents and carers, prepare an **Accelerated Progress Plan (APP)**, which demonstrates how the local area will address the 12 outstanding areas of significant weakness identified in the original inspection in 2018. This is now in place.

The APP has clear targets and milestones and is regularly monitored and approved by the SEND Improvement Board (which is chaired by the Commissioner, John Coughlan) in order to ensure that it is improving the experience of children, young people and their families and improving outcomes.

Some of the improvements and progress that we are making against that plan are detailed on the following pages:



You Said, We Did/Are Doing....

You Said that it was difficult to get involved in SEND strategic plans and to engage with leaders.

We Did/are Doing

We have heard that parents and carers have found it difficult to communicate with SEND leaders and to have a meaningful say on plans and developments relating to SEND.

- In response to these concerns raised, in the Autumn of 2021, the SEND Improvement Board (chaired by the Commissioner, John Coughlan) and the SEND Management Group were set up to create plans for change and make them happen. The Birmingham Parent Carer Forum is a key member of these meetings and represents the voice and experience of families at all of them.
- To ensure the voice and experience of parents and families is central to the SEND Improvement Board meetings, the start of each meeting includes real-time lived experience case examples from families. This is a behaviour that we are hoping to see replicated in many other SEND Leadership meetings.
- We have also created a group called 'Working Together Well' which makes sure that actions happen such as co-producing (creating, designing, and assessing SEND systems and products together) and making more engagement opportunities for parents' carers and young people.
- The Parent Carer Forum and a representative for young people with SEND are part of this group which works to strengthen relationships with parents and carers and improved outcomes for their children.

You have said that you would like to be more involved and engaged in decision making and planning about service developments and improvements

We Did/are Doing

To address this, we have also set up 6 small groups where we are hoping to have wide involvement of parents and carers to look at ways of:

- Improving parent carer engagement and making sure you are heard
- Ensuring the voice and experience of young people is heard
- Setting up a SEND co-production champions network which will make sure that co-production is in everything we do.
- Involving schools and families and everyone involved in SEND in 'working well together'
- Developing and designing a co-production framework – this will describe and set the principles on how/what/when we co-produce as a whole partnership.



- Measuring our improvements on working with families based on what families have told us. i.e. are our improvements making a difference?

You have said that to maximise opportunities for parents and carers to become involved and attend meetings we should make meeting times that support childcare and parental care arrangements

We Did/are Doing

- Acting on advice from our Parent Carer Forum we now do our best to make sure that SEND Improvement meetings and events are held when children are usually in school classroom teaching time between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm. We have also included this as a written requirement for all meetings being arranged as part of SEND Improvement. We will aim for this rule to be part of the usual practice for SEND meetings in the future.

You Said that you feel co-production is weak in Birmingham and that leaders don't seem to understand what it means.

We Did/are Doing

- We are looking at finding ways of working where children and young people, families, and those that provide the SEND services work together more closely to create services that work for all (this is known as 'co-production').
- We understand that you need confidence and assurance that Local area SEND leaders understand this way of working together. The Local Area SEND partnership (education, health and social care) met with the Parent Carer Forum to start detailed conversation and process of working on a shared understanding and a shared definition of SEND co-production.
- In the Spring, when we are happy that we have a definition and a way of working that is agreed and understood by all, we will be publishing it alongside other key pieces of work that will be a co-production framework.
- Since November 2021 we have been carrying out a research/learning exercise to find services where co-production is working well in schools, care, health, and community settings so that we can learn from examples of good practice which have involved parent carers and young people working co-productively with others. By May we will be publishing a report on these findings with recommendations.



You Said that you wanted to be included in more engagement activities so that your opinions and experiences are included in how services can be improved

We Did/are Doing

- Since September 2021 we have been working closely with the parent carer forum, schools, and health settings to find ways to reach out to and involve parents, carers, and young people in Birmingham to improve SEND services and the experience of the SEND journey for families.
- Between December 2021 and March 2022, a total of 8 'Have your say' events have been held, inviting parents and carers events to share their hear the views and experiences of parents and carers on SEND support and services, co-production, and the SEND Local Offer website.
- We have heard that parents would like engagement events to be held at different times during weekdays and weekends and so we have organised the 'Have your say' events in the daytimes, evenings and on Saturday morning. They have been both online and in person.
- At the end of every 'Have your say' event we are asking parents and carers to complete feedback surveys. We will use the information that you provide in these surveys to continually improve how we arrange future engagement events for parents and carers based on what you tell us.
- Over 700 parents and carers signed up to attend these workshops although only 100 attended. The sessions have been held in person and online at various times and locations to ensure everyone can attend who would like to.
- We will also use the early feedback from these events to identify areas for improvement across services so that things like access to services and signposting; advice and information about what to expect from services and communication and your involvement in your child's EHC plans being improved.

You have said that you would like to be more engaged and kept more up-to-date about things that are happening or being planned for SEND support.

We Did/Are Doing/.....

- As well as making sure that the Birmingham Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) is represented at SEND Improvement planning meetings we are reaching out to parents and carers at all the 'Have Your Say' events to invite and encourage signing up to membership of the PCF and/or to become involved at many different levels including receiving regular updates and newsletters from the Communications Lead Officer.



These are some of the ways and opportunities for Parents/ Carers to get involved and be heard. If you have any more suggestions/ideas where we could do more on this, we would like to hear your views. Please contact us at SENDImpComm@birmingham.gov.uk or feedback on the home page of the SEND Local Offer website - www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk

You Said - Not enough people have heard of the SEND Local Offer website

We Did/Are Doing.....

- We have made a promotional video which will explain more about the website, what it includes and how to find it, so that more people will get to know about it and use it regularly. Find it here - <https://youtu.be/TcAbIK6EVQ0>
Signed video - <https://youtu.be/eG6co9SAhK0>
- We have contacted all Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in schools and reminded them to have an obvious link to the SEND Local Offer website from their school website, so parents and carers are made aware of the Local Offer website when they are looking at information on their school.
- We have held 8 parent/carer engagement meetings to gather opinions on the SEND Local Offer website and how better to promote it and are learning from parents and carers about what they want to see on the site and how we can let more people know about it.
- We are working in the background to make the site easier to find in internet searches. Birmingham City Council (BCC), NHS, and Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT) are working to promote the site at all meetings and interactions with professionals, families, and schools to help to spread the word about the website.
- We have set up a focus group including parents, schools, children, and young people as well as NHS and Children's Trust staff and other professionals to help us to improve the site for users.
- We are talking to children and young people about what they would like to see on the site.

As a result, whilst this is work in progress, we are now promoting the Local Offer Site far and wide and implementing your feedback.



You Said - People can't find what they want on the SEND Local Offer website

We Did/Are Doing...

- We have worked with parents and carers who have attended the engagement events to get their views on how to improve the site.
- All relevant education, health and social care staff are being asked to look at the site and give feedback on how the site could work better.
- The search tool has been upgraded and now works far more effectively.
- We are planning to work with parents/carers to look at how the site could be laid out better. We'll do this with children and young people too.
- We have moved some areas of the site to make them easier to find.
- The accessibility tool has been upgraded and improved so that more people can access the site and read it more easily.

As a result of these changes and taking on board your feedback we hope you agree the Local Offer website is improving. What do you think? Please give us your feedback at www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk

You Said – We can't speak to anyone in SENAR

We Did/Are Doing.....

- We have secured additional funding to recruit more staff into the SENAR service
- We have recruited over 50 new officers into the SENAR service to support the casework and completion of annual review and assessment paperwork which will help us to help families more efficiently and more quickly
- We have rearranged the SENAR service into 4 area teams – North, East, South & West so that there will be dedicated help for your area and your young person is allocated to the area team dependent upon their setting postcode or their home postcode if they are out of a setting
- We've added in more relevant leadership to drive the change and improvements needed in the service so that they get done efficiently and within the guidance set in the SEND Code of Practice.

As a result, there will be more resources to support Parents and Carers when needed. Whilst we embed the new structure in the service and arrange for contact telephone points for all service officers please continue to contact the Parent Link service at Parentlinkservice@birmingham.gov.uk 0121 303 8461



You Said – There isn't one person dedicated to look after our child's needs

We Did/are Doing

- The ongoing recruitment drive will allow for the young people in our service to be allocated into area teams and for officers to be assigned a caseload. This will start to impact in the coming weeks and months as we assign each young person their own caseworker.
- We are putting in an upgraded case management system (Nexus) in place so that everyone involved with a child can access their information. This is an ongoing programme of work and we hope to have the system live and functional by the end of September 2022.
- We are working with parents and professionals to develop a new EHCP needs assessments process where parents and carers contribute their opinions for inclusion in the EHCP. A trial of the new process will start in March.
- We are setting standards for quality with partners and developing a Quality Assurance framework that will and clarify roles and responsibilities so that together we know how well we are doing and can test that out. This will also ensure that the EHC plans are robust and personalised to the young person. This will be in place in September 2022.

You Said – There isn't good enough SEND provision in mainstream schools in Birmingham

We Did/are Doing.....

The Developing Local Provision (DLP) project was set up and rolled out across Birmingham schools' partnerships last term to support with additional £14m investment over the programme for mainstream schools and early years settings, to build and develop their SEND knowledge, skills, and provision to help pupils with SEND do better within mainstream schools.

There is already some excellent evidence of the improvement that some of these projects have made to children with SEND in both secondary and primary mainstream schools (the DLP is available to all mainstream schools). For example, in a project running across a group of secondary schools to improve literacy for children and young people who were not performing well, the pupils made the following improvements in just six weeks:

- *Their reading and comprehension age improved by 2 years and 2 months*
- *2.3% increase above expected levels in word recognition i.e. recognising common words on the page*
- *An average of 2 bands progress above their expected standards on the Birmingham language and literacy scale*
- *On a 5-point emotion rating scale, pupils made almost a whole grade's progress (0.8), feeling happy at the end of the programme with an improved attitude and resilience towards reading and literacy.*
- *Significant increase in parental and home school SENCO satisfaction in SEND provision for the children in the programme.*



As part of the DLP, **the special school outreach service** has also been developed to provide additional specialist SEND support for children and young people, and school staff in our mainstream schools. Mainstream schools can now access support from special schools directly to meet the needs of more pupils, through a referral system being managed by Wilson Stuart School. This initiative will provide and build additional capacity across Birmingham to improve provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Improvements in the Health Service

You Said - Waiting lists are too long for Community Therapy services and Autism Assessments.

We Did/Are Doing.....

- The Children's Community Therapy teams (Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and Autism Assessment Team) are working closely with the Local NHS teams to monitor the waiting lists and develop set targets for each service.
- The Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) waiting lists have shortened which means families are being seen sooner for initial assessments. OT average wait is 11 weeks, SLT average waits for an initial assessment for clinics is 4.7 weeks and 22 weeks to package of care (POC). Plans to reduce package of care waits are also being developed.
- Providers have continued to use digital consultations, with feedback from families, to support children and families where applicable.
- Extra temporary Speech and Language Therapists have been recruited to further support work to reduce waiting times, which was seen in the waitlist reduction up to Dec 2021.
- Transformational work has commenced moving SLT towards a "balanced system" approach to meeting speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN). This model of working will support the reduction in waiting lists by embedding a system-wide approach to communication needs from universal to targeted level (education settings will be better supported to meet SLCN with a different approach from therapists).
- The OT service has introduced parent/carer workshops to support families. If a child needs therapy as part of their package of care, specific workshops have been developed for targeted and specialist support. <https://www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/children-and-young-people/services-parent-portal/paediatric-occupational-therapy-service/workshop-resources/>
- Improvements in OT are being carried out to identify referrals that can be assessed by the SEND Team to allow the physio service to focus on specific referrals.
- A new software called 'Patient Initiated Follow Up (PIFU)' system is due imminently within the paediatric physiotherapy service, this will help providers and systems manage the waitlists and see patients most in need more quickly.



- We have created 'Cross Border Working Principles 2021', which outlines how children and young people who live on the border are supported in therapy services when they need to access neighbouring services. The principles help to ensure smooth and timely access to the appropriate services and support for the child, reducing waiting times.
- We have introduced Healios (online provider of Autism assessments) to help reduce ASD assessment waiting times. It is used to see children and young people aged 7+ awaiting assessment in Birmingham.
- By December 2021 Healios had completed 1555 Autism Spectrum Disorder assessments and is expected to see another 330 children between Jan-Mar 2022.
- Waiting times for school-aged children (7+) have reduced down to an average of 29 weeks, this is for all families.

You Said - What support is available for families that are waiting for therapies?

We Did/Are Doing.....

- Advice lines have provided information advice and guidance to families and professionals. The advice has been positively received by families as a means of information and guidance particularly while they are on the waiting list, and some families have reported that the advice 'was invaluable' and 'a lifeline'.

For details of the advice lines please see <https://www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/children-and-young-people/services-parent-portal/>

- The services have developed a range of support, advice, and guidance YouTube videos for specific service needs to support families while they wait, these are available on the Trust webpages.
- The service webpages contain a range of resources, flyers, and links to further support families while they wait for their child's appointment.

Occupational Therapy – 0121 683 2325 www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/children-and-young-people/services-parent-portal/paediatric-occupational-therapy-service/

Speech and Language Therapy – 0121 466 6231 www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/children-and-young-people/services-parent-portal/birmingham-slt/slt-videos/

Physiotherapy – 0121 466 5193 www.bhamcommunity.nhs.uk/patients-public/children-and-young-people/services-parent-portal/paediatric-physiotherapy-service/



You Said - We need better access to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) support services. We need more support -post-diagnosis

We Did/are Doing

An all-age Autism support service is currently in development following consultation with experts by experience, services, and commissioners. The next steps for the service include recruitment to roles and development of a dedicated website and phone line. The contract period started January 2022, there is a "go live" date of April 1st 2022

You Said – the out-of-hours support for Mental Health crisis does not always meet the needs of Children and Young People with Learning Disabilities and Autism.

We Did/Are Doing.....

- Within Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB) the Disability Intensive Support Enhanced (DICE) team currently focus on the reduction of crisis by providing specialist early intervention work. Three Year RoadMap - Enhanced Support, Crisis This service is to be expanded, the service specifications are with the parent carer forums for sign off.

You Said - What is the update on health appointments and social distancing guidance? How much is virtual now and what can parents expect?

We Did/are Doing

- Most Health providers in Birmingham continue to offer a mix of face to face and virtual or telephone appointments
- Digital platforms were developed quickly and innovatively in response to Covid but are now being reviewed, co-productively with families to understand preferences and provide patient choice.
- A mix of virtual and face-to-face appointments is now offered to provide choice. Physiotherapy, due to the nature of the service, returned to predominantly face-to-face appointments from January 2022. Virtual appointments have been well received by some families through direct feedback, stating they better support their child's needs.

