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**TRAFFORD
COUNCIL**

AGENDA PAPERS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 9 July 2019

Time: 6.30 pm

Place: Committee Room 2 and 3, Trafford Town Hall, Talbot Road, Stretford, M32 0TH.

A G E N D A

PART I

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| 10. | CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK & FINISH GROUP REVIEW INTO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH & CARE PLAN (EHCP) PROCESS IN TRAFFORD | 1 - 16 |
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SARA TODD

Chief Executive

Membership of the Committee

Councillors D. Western (Chair), T. Carey (Vice-Chair), J. Bennett, Miss L. Blackburn, J. Dillon, J. Holden, S. Longden, A. New, S.B. Procter, D. Acton (ex-Officio), Dr. K. Barclay (ex-Officio) and Khan.

Further Information

For help, advice and information about this meeting please contact:

Fabiola Fuschi,
Tel: 0161 912 2019
Email: fabiola.fuschi@trafford.gov.uk

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TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
Date: 9 July 2019
Report for: Approval
Report of: Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish Group: Review of the Education, Health & Care Plan Process

Report Title

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee Task & Finish Group Review into the Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) Process in Trafford.

Summary

The report details the work of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee in reviewing EHCPs within Trafford. The report details the approach taken and the sources of information gathered by the Councilors. The report then details the findings of the Councilors in 10 areas of concern that were identified relating to EHCPs.

Recommendations

That the Committee approve the recommendations in section nine of the report to be submitted for consideration by the Executive

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Alexander Murray

Extension: 4250

1 Background

1.1 EHCPs have been part of the provision for children with Special Educational needs since they were introduced in 2014. The Councils Scrutiny Committee had previously done a piece of work on EHCPs in 2016 (Appendix 1) which made five recommendations to the Executive. The report in 2014 identified that there were a number of issues with the delivery of EHCPs and the Councillors wanted to see whether progress had been made in these areas while looking to see whether any new issues or areas of good practice had developed.

2 Membership

2.1 The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee (CYPS) agreed at their first meeting 10 July 2018 that they would like to form a task and finish Councillors within their first year. Committee Members were asked to contact officers if they wished to partake in the work and the following Councillors volunteered;

Denies Western (Chair),
Jayne Dillon
Adele New
Daniel Jerrome
Graham Whitham
Johnathan Coupe
Amy Whyte

3. Approach

3.1 The Councillors agreed to follow a similar approach to that taken by the previous review by gathering information from and meeting with senior officers and parents involved in the service. In addition the Councillors met with the EHCP team to understand the work that they were doing and how they perceived the position within the Council. Through the review process it became clear that the Councillors would not be able to do a full extensive review within one year. The work that has been conducted this year, summarised within this report, will help to structure further work of the Committee so that a comprehensive review of the EHCP process within the Council can be completed.

4. Initial Meeting

4.1 At the first meeting of the group in August Councillor Jerrome informed the other Councillors that he had been contacted by a resident whose children had Autism and had issues in accessing support. Councillor New added that she was aware of issues that parents were having in getting their children assessed and recognised as

having SEND. The Councillors then discussed the importance of early identification¹ of need and swift implementation of support for children with SEND².

The Councillors then agreed that EHCP assessment would be the main area of focus. The Chair informed the group that the Scrutiny Committee had previously completed a piece of task and finish work looking at EHCPs in 2016 and the Councillors requested copies of the report for information. The group then discussed the aspects of assessments and came up with a list of questions to be put to senior officers in order to focus their work. The Councillors came up with 16 questions and requests for information which were then submitted to the Acting Corporate Director for Children's Services and the Director Education Standards, Quality and Performance. The officers were also asked to attend the next meeting of the Councillors on the 9th October 2018.

5. Meeting with Acting Corporate Director of Children's Services and Director for Education Standards, Quality and Performance

5.1 Prior to the meeting the responses to the questions posed at the first meeting were sent through to the Members (Appendix 2). At the meeting the Councillors and officers went through each question, the response that had been provided to the Councillors, and then the Councillors asked any further questions that stemmed from the response. It was made clear to the Councillors that as the Head of Service had been on leave there were a number of answers that could not be provided or that were incomplete. There were also some questions which were vague so while information had been given the officers were not certain whether it was what the Councillors wanted and asked them to clarify what, if any, additional information they wanted.

5.2 The Councillors had asked for anonymised versions of successful and unsuccessful referrals so that they could compare them and better understand why they had been successful or not. The Officers had been unable to provide these

¹ Early intervention is defined as "identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes" by the Early Intervention Foundation.

(<https://www.eif.org.uk>).

² The Department for Education and Department of Health Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf)

Section 5.36 states:

"It is particularly important in the early years that there is no delay in making any necessary special educational provision. Delay at this stage can give rise to learning difficulty and subsequently to loss of self-esteem, frustration in learning and to behaviour difficulties. Early action to address identified needs is critical to the future progress and improved outcomes that are essential in helping the child to prepare for adult life"

example forms as they were held on liquid logic However, the team were working on training SENCOs on how to complete the forms and they would share that with the Councillors once it was ready, although the Councillors have still not had sight of this. The Officers explained the training and told the Councillors that it was aimed at setting the expectations of what was required to make the decision to assess and the information the panel required to make their decisions³. The Councillors expressed a need to ensure that the Council was meeting its legal obligations with regard to children and young people with SEND⁴.

5.3 At the meeting the Councillors were satisfied with some of the answers and explanations that they received from the Officers. It was clear that the Council still had a number of issues regarding SEND and that officers were working on ways of improving the service which the Councillors were keen see examples of. The Officers made it clear that they wanted to work with both Scrutiny and parents in improving the service.

6 Meeting with Trafford Parent and Young Peoples' Partnership Service (PYPPS), Trafford Parent Forum, parents and a Head Teacher

6.1 The Councillors met with the Manager of Trafford Parent and Young Peoples' Partnership Service (which is a statutory information, advice, and support service), the Director of Trafford Parent Forum (TPF), the Head Teacher of Delamere School, and two Trafford Parents. At the meeting the manager of PYPPS and the Director of Trafford Parent Forum raised a number of concerns with the Councillors. Their concerns included; the level of communication between the Council and parents, the number of cases refused by the Council, the quality of EHCPs being completed and the time that it took to complete them. Regarding EHCPs, the report submitted to the councillors from Trafford Parent forum stated that:

“The on-going issues this area of SEND continuously plagues children and young people with SEND, their parents, and families in Trafford.”

³ The information provided at the meeting did not align with the report submitted to the councillors by the Trafford Parent Forum which stated “Some parents are repeatedly told by schools that their child will only be eligible for an EHCP assessment if they Have an EP report, been through 2 cycles of plan/do/review at SEN Support, are 2 years behind their peers, the school have spent £6000 additional support funding.”

⁴ Section 36(8) of the Children and Families Act 2014 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/section/36/enacted>) States: “The local authority must secure an EHC needs assessment for the child or young person if, after having regard to any views expressed and evidence submitted under subsection (7), the authority is of the opinion that—
(a) the child or young person has or may have special educational needs, and
(b) it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made for the child or young person in accordance with an EHC plan.”

6.2 The two parents who attended the meeting had varying experiences when trying to access support from the Council. One parent had been well supported throughout and her child had been placed on an EHCP plan quickly and received the support they required. The other parent had needed to battle the Council at every juncture and it had taken years of her trying to access support. Hearing these accounts it seemed clear to the Councillors that the child who had a clear disability had been given the support they required. However, the parent of the two children who were high performing in school had struggled to get the Council to recognise their children's SEND and had to pay for independent assessments by child psychologists in order to confirm that her children actually had needs.

6.3 The Head teacher of Delamere School spoke about the journey that the school had been through to get to a point where they were recognised as a school that provided excellent SEND support. At the meeting she expressed her concerns over communications with the Council and the lack of a cohesive collaborative approach towards SEND between schools and the Council. This included a lack of involvement with the council in the review of plans. She stated that the best plans for children in her school were the ones which were created by the school, rather than by Trafford SEND Department.

6.4 All those who were at the meeting told the Councillors about their concerns regarding the cuts to funding that were planned by the Council. While this issue lies outside of the area that the Councillors were looking at they were concerned that services, which appear to be struggling to cope with demand and that parents feel are currently failing them and their child, would be reduced further.

6.5 Following the meeting, PYPPS and Trafford Parent Forum sent two reports (Appendices 3 and 4) to the Councillors for information. These reports gave an overview of PYPPS and Trafford Parent Forum understanding of the position of SEND services within Trafford and the work that PYPPS and Trafford Parent Forum were undertaking to support parents in the area. The information from these reports has helped to inform the Councillors of the issues within Trafford, covered in detail below, and given the Councillors ideas as to where to focus their continued review as well as some possible solutions to problems. The PYPPS report laid out a wide range of service user concerns. The main concerns were; EHC process and time scales, Exclusions and the six day provision for young people with SEND/EHC plans, and special school placements (both in and out of borough). PYPPS support a number of families through disagreement resolution, mediation and tribunal. PYPPS advised that a major area of concern was that the number of exclusions of young people with SEND/EHC plans had increased. There were also a number of cases within Trafford where young people who had SEND had been excluded, without their needs being recognised by their school and without having received any support from their school.

7 Meeting with the Trafford EHCP Team

7.1 The Councillors met with the managers and some members of the EHCP team along with a number of officers who helped to provide the other services which supported the work of the team. Some of those in attendance sat upon the assessment panels and were able to give the Councillors an insight on how they felt the panels worked. At the meeting the work of the EHCP team was described to the Councillors which included the process that the panels went through in order to make their decision. The EHCP coordinators were the key officers for each case and coordinated the work being done by schools and parents in order to prepare cases to go to the panel. The Councillors were told that if the panel felt that the information provided was not adequate that they would request further information from the parent or school as required. Following the panel's decision, it was advised that, the EHCP Coordinator would continue to work on the case; meeting with any other people involved in providing support to the child and working with them to write the EHCP. The Coordinator would then continue to be involved in conducting reviews and act as a point of contact for those providing support for the child.

7.2 The Councillors were informed of the changes that had been made within the team in the last twelve months. The team had been increased so that there were eight EHCP Coordinators and two Senior Coordinators. The Councillors were told that the Council had a number of staff hired as plan writers who had been brought in to help the team in clearing a backlog of plans. This backlog was close to being cleared and it was made clear to the Councillors that these positions would not be permanent. There had also been a large change within the team in terms of the levels of support offered to them by managers and the Council in general.

7.3 The Councillors were told that the implementation of the Liquid Logic System had greatly improved the processes relating to EHCPs. As a single system was now being used by all of the professionals from both health and social care it meant that they all had access to all the information relating to each case. However, It was not made clear as to whether parents were advised that all of the professionals would have access to their child's information. The Liquid Logic System also set reminders and aided the coordinators in the organisation and management of their workload. The attitude of all of the EHCP team who were at the meeting was very positive and they all spoke of the improvements that had been seen in the past year.

8 Task and Finish Councillors Findings

8.1 Following the meetings and the review of the documents and information provided by Officers, PYPs, Trafford Parents Forum, parents, and the Head Teacher of Delamere a number of issues became apparent within Trafford. As shown by the 2107 data provided by PYPs Trafford had been performing at one of the lowest levels out of the 23 Councils within the North West. Below is a summary

of each of the issues that were identified by the Councillors, and what they would like to do next.

8.2 Increase in Referrals

8.2.1 In all of the meetings that the Councillors attended the increase in the number of referrals, especially parent referrals, was listed as an issue. Despite all parties being aware of this there was very little known about why the number of referrals was increasing. The Councillors want to better understand the issues surrounding the increase in referrals through an analysis of where referrals are being received from so any trends within Trafford can be identified. The Councillors would like to look at trends among parental referrals in particular as the increase here suggests that either parents think the needs of their children are not being met or that parents are not being informed of the support available to aid them in completing a referral. The Councillors note that the legal requirements for whether to conduct an EHC needs assessment are set very low and they want assurance that the Council is not (illegally) making it more difficult for Children and Young People to receive an assessment.

8.2.2 With regards to needs not being met the Councillors had concerns that it was possible that children who were disruptive within class maybe the ones schools were more likely to refer for support. It was felt that some children who had SEND may be over looked as their needs are masked and therefore not as obvious as others, which could be causing parents to make referrals themselves. The Councillors want to look at the referrals received from parents to see if this could be one of the reasons behind the increase.

8.3 SENCO Training and Support

8.3.1 In the two meetings held with officers the Councillors were informed of the two SENCO forums that had been created. The Councillors were told that these forums were well attended (although attendance figures were not given) and that they functioned well in providing a conduit for communication between SENCOS and the Council. However, at the meeting with PYPPS, parents, and TPF the Head Teacher of Delamere School spoke of the lack of engagement with school staff in general although whether this was with the SENCO in particular or the wider faculty was not clear. Trafford Parent Forum stated:

“In our opinion training on SEND law is imperative for all Trafford SEND staff, including School Staff and Governors, and not one-off or in-house training but an ongoing programme that all staff will benefit from, which has no barriers to access, and where the level of knowledge is kept current and relevant. This training must be delivered by an independent and qualified organisation such as the Independent Provider of Special Education Advice.”

Given the importance of this the councillors wanted to be informed of what legal training all staff involved with conducting assessments and writing plans have.

8.3.2 The Councillors were told by officers about the new guidance and training that was being developed for SENCOS. The Councillors would like to see the new guidance and the training programme for SENCOS, which was offered when they met with Officers on the 9 October 2018 as they have not yet had sight of this. The Head Teacher at Delamere and the PYPPS both raised that training should be offered to all staff involved with SEND as such the Councillors would like to know whether the training being offered to SENCOS could be rolled out on a larger scale.

8.4 Panel Process and Decision Communication with Parents

8.4.1 From the beginning of the work the Councillors tried to gain a better understanding of the panel's decisions regarding referrals. It was not until they met with members of the panel that a clear coherent picture of the process followed by the panel became known. This was the experience of Councillors with the support officers who provided them with information and met with them face to face, not that of a parent that had no one to contact to aid them. The Councillors were concerned that there was no parental voice on the Council's panels, which is something that they would like to be considered. The Councillors were not satisfied that the panels processes were robust and would like to receive all documentation explaining how the panels work and why they are set up in this way as these panels have no legal status. The Councillors are concerned that the panel process may not stand up to legal challenge and may be found to be unlawful policy which has denied children assessment of needs. Children are entitled to an appropriate not just an adequate education.

8.4.1.1 The Councillors also felt that the panels may obscure the decision making process as parents do not know who made the decision or how the decision was reached. The Councillor had further worries as it was not clear from the information that they received whether official minutes were being taken at panel meetings or, if they were being taken, whether they were compliant with public law (taken in a prescribed way, circulated for approval, and then approved). While there could be issues in terms of child protection and GDPR the Councillors would like for the possibility for this to be considered for distribution to those involved with the case.

8.4.2 PYPPS highlighted the lack of communication and understanding around decision making as a major factor in the frustration of parents. When speaking to parents the Councillors were told that the lack of detail in the responses they received had a negative impact upon them. If parents were not informed of the reasons why their child was refused an assessment they were left to assume what the reasons were, which could lead to doubt of their perceptions of their child and their ability as a parent. This is another reason why the Councillors believe that the for Council's decision making process should be as transparent as possible.

8.4.3 The Councillors would like there to be a full review of the documentation available to parents. The review needs to include the guidance available on the council's website and the documents that are sent to parents at each stage of the process, especially those following a decision. The Councillors would like to be part of this review along with representatives from Trafford Parent Forum.

8.4.5 The Councillors would like for full process maps and customer journeys to be provided for each stage of the EHCP process so that they can be assured that communication with parents is built into the system at all key points. If process maps and customer journeys are not available the Councillors would like for them to be developed in collaboration with PYPs and Trafford Parent Forum.

8.4.6 The table below summarises data from Table 8 of the 2017, 2018, and 2019 Department for Education SEN Tables. The data indicates that alongside the evident increase in requests received there has been a significant increase in the proportion of requests for assessment issued with an EHC plan (from 25% refused in 2018 to 1.2% refused in 2019). The Councillors would like to know what led to such an apparent shift in the outcome of the decision making process following assessment.

Year	No. of initial EHC requests	No of initial requests refused for assessment	%	No. of C&YP assessed and decided not to issue an EHC plan	%	No. of C&YP for whom EHC plans were made for the first time	%
2016	74	15	20.2	31	41.9	28	37.9
2017	224	44	19.6	56	25.0	91	40.6
2018	331	52	15.7	4	1.2	318*	

* This number includes requests from 2017, for whom plans were made in 2018

8.4.7 Table 9 of the 2019 Department for Education SEN Tables indicated that in 2018 Trafford issued only 14.8% of new EHC plans within the statutory 20 week timescale, compared to 58.0% nationally. Councillors would like to be provided with a full breakdown of how long it took to issue each new EHC plan within 2018, and also 2019 to date. Additionally, the Councillors would like informed of what the key factors of delay were and what is being done to improve the issuing time for EHC plans.

8.5 Tribunals

8.5.1 All the people that the Councillors met with and information they received showed that there had been an increase in the number of cases going to tribunal.

While all those contacted noted the increase the reasons for the increase differed greatly. Parents stated that lack of communication and a focus upon budgets above children's needs were the main reasons behind the increase. Conversely officers felt that the increase was due to external factors making parents more adversarial towards the Council. At the meeting with parents, school staff, PYPPS, and Parents Forum there were stories around tribunal which described the process as 'combative'. The Head Teacher from Delamere stated that it was not clear what the legal criterion for a plan was. Some of the comments at the received by the Councillors included; that they should champion a different ethos within the Council, that the Council needed to see the child before the money, that it was felt that bureaucracy came before the child, that the Council needed to rebuild trust with parents and schools, that just getting a getting a response from the Council was difficult for schools. It was suggested that the local authority should invest their money differently in order to support schools to be more inclusive. The Councillors are aware of an Inclusion Quality Mark that schools can work towards over 3 years and feel that the Council should look to support schools in achieving this mark.

8.5.2 Of the 15 tribunals, 40% (6) were resolved early in the process through informal/ formal mediation with the council. 60% of the 15 (9) were taken to the stage of the decision being formally challenged through appeal and of those 9, 56% (5) of cases then reached agreement with the council prior to a final appeal hearing. Of the 4 that proceeded to final hearing 50% (2) resulted in the council's original decision being overturned. The high proportion of cases that proceed beyond mediation but then agreement was reached appears to indicate that Trafford's mediation offer is not performing well, as parents were opting to go to tribunal rather than partake in the process.

8.5.3 The Councillors would like look at the mediation procedure and find out why parents are unwilling to take part in these meetings. At the meeting with PYPPS it was highlighted that parents often felt intimidated by the mediation process as it was held entirely with Council officers. The Councillors would like to look into ways that independent support, such as a PYPPS member, could be offered to all parents going through mediation so that they did not feel outnumbered and isolated.

8.5.4 This is another area where the communications that are sent to parents following panel decisions are vital, especially in cases when a child should be in receipt of other support. The Councillors want to know what follow up is in place in these cases to ensure that the children are set on the path to receive that support.

8.5.5 The Councillors would like to look into ways that contact could be made with parents going through a Tribunal to ascertain the reasons for their action. It would be particularly useful to hear from those parents who refused mediation but then reached agreement with the Council afterwards or where the Council conceded. As

part of this the Councillors would like a full explanation of the Council's process from start to finish from the point where the appeal papers come in.

8.6 EHCP Assessment

8.6.1 A large area of concern for the Councillors was the difference in assessments that had been reported by parents who had paid for their own assessments to be conducted. The Councillors had concerns about this from the start of their work as the parents who had contacted Councillor Jerrome had expressed that they had paid for an independent assessment and found that it was far more in depth and of a higher standard than that of the Council. Another Councillor backed this view up due to their personnel experience with the service and this was further supported by the information received from the PYPSS and Trafford Parents Forum.

8.6.2 When concern was raised with officers about the quality of the assessments the officers told the Councillors that it was hard to tell which one was of better quality without having them side by side. The reason that assessments were a particular concern for the Councillors was the cost of external assessments meant that only affluent parents could afford them. This meant that if there was an issue with Trafford's approach it would disproportionately affect disadvantaged families.

8.6.3 The Councillors would like for this comparison to be carried out to provide assurance that the Trafford assessments are of an adequate standard. Parents expressed concern as to the objectivity of any Council staff or staff from Council Commissioned services that may perform such a comparison. Therefore the committee would like for an independent professional to carry out the comparison.

8.7 EHCPs

8.7.1 The quality and consistency of EHCPs was another issue that was highlighted by PYPSS and TPF. In the information provided to the Councillors they described how parents felt that the quality of their child's EHCP was down to the luck of which officer was writing the plan. They gave reports of plans that looked like they had been simply copied and pasted from other plans with some having the wrong child's name on them. However, the information received also stated that a small improvement had been noticed since the Ofsted inspection in 2017. The Councillors would like to receive a random selection of anonymised plans for them to see the standard that are being produced. The Councillors would also like the PYPSS and TPF to contact them if they receive any further reports of low quality plans.

8.8 EHCP Reviews

8.8.1 The parents who contacted Councillor Jerrome and the PPYS reported that while schools made changes to the EHCP annually following their reviews the Council did not. When the Councillors met with the EHCP team they were told that this was due to them trying not to make too many adjustments to the plan and instead focusing on changes at key transitional phases and following any major

disruption. The team explained that there were a number of other elements to the support received by children that were updated in accordance with the outcomes of the annual review. The Councillors felt that this approach was not being communicated well, if at all, to parents and that this was another area where the TPF should be consulted to improve the service. Councillors explained that the Council needed to be following the law rather than local policy and that if the updated support was not captured within Part F of the EHCP it was not legally binding.

8.9 Advertising and Capacity of PYPPS

8.9.1 When the Councillors asked officers about support for parents the Councillors were told about PYPPS. All feedback received about PYPPS and the Councillors own experience of working with them was extremely positive. The report conducted in 2016 recommended that the working relationship between the Council and PYPPS be championed and encouraged. When meeting with PYPPS it seemed as though this recommendation had not yet come to fruition. The Councillors would like to reiterate this recommendation and to look at ways that the Council could help parents to find and contact the service. The Councillors are aware that the documentation sent out to parents going through the EHCP process mentions PYPPS as a contact but the Councillors want to ensure it is clear that PYPPS are independent from the Council and exist specifically to support parents even though they receive funding from the Council.

8.9.2 An area of concern for the Councillors was the part of the report received from PYPPS which spoke about their own capacity. It stated that they were functioning at the limits of their capacity and would struggle to provide additional support. They were looking at ways of coping with this demand themselves, by seeking additional funding and peer support, but the Councillors feel that the Council should look at how they can support PYPPS to increase their capacity as the service represents excellent value for money, which would be increased further through full utilisation by Council officers.

8.10 Exclusions

8.10.1 The Officers and PYPPS both acknowledged that the number of exclusions within Trafford had been increasing. This was an area that the Councillors had very little time to spend on but, due to the wide reaching impact these cases have upon the system, they feel that this area should be reviewed in depth. As exclusions are often the result of issues within the system the Councillors felt that this review should happen once they had gained a good understanding of the system. Councillors had been advised Trafford were compiling a Database to find out where these children were going and monitoring attendance as exclusions have increased dramatically.

8.10.2 When exclusions were raised with Officers they informed the Councillors of work that was ongoing to tackle the issue. These pieces of work included increasing the number of schools within the area that are well suited to supporting children with

challenging needs. The Councillors were also informed of an organisation called “the Bridge” who worked with schools to help challenging children back into education. The Officers informed the Councillors that the number of exclusions were on the rise across greater Manchester so it may be something that needs to be looked at in a wider context.

8.11 EHCP team structure and the high turnover of staff

8.11.1 The final area that was highlighted throughout the Councillors meetings was the high level of turnover of staff within the EHCP team. This was noticed by the Councillors through their own experience and highlighted as one of the main concerns of PYPPS and Trafford Parent Forum. In the report from Trafford Parent Forum, it stated “we feel that a workforce who is committed and passionate, respected and feels worthy will do the best they possibly can to produce plans that are well written, quantifiable and specific for the child or young person with SEND’. The high level of turnover had a huge impact upon the service as relationships between the officers, school staff, and parents are vitally important to providing consistent high quality support to a child.

8.11.2 When the Councillors met with the EHCP team they were assured that the changes that had been made to the structure would create a more stable environment and that the high level of turnover would reduce. They were also told that the implementation of the liquid logic system would greatly reduce the impact that staff leaving would have, as there would not be the loss of information that happened previously as it was all held within the system. Trafford Parent Forum noted that since the Ofsted report in 2017 there had been an improvement in communication with the team and that the coordinators were more approachable. This is an area that the committee would like to keep an eye upon to ensure that the improvements that have been seen are long term. One way that they would like to do this is to conduct an anonymised survey with staff to get their feedback on their working environment and the progress being made by the service.

9. Recommendations

Given the large number of recommendations they have been grouped into those relating to training, service change, further work to be done by the Task and Finish group, service review, and requests for information.

Training

1. That all staff involved in SEND services receive legal training from an independent source, such as IPSEA, to ensure that those working in the authority are fully aware of, and able to meet, their legal obligations
2. That the training and guidance for SENCOs be provided to the Task and Finish group and that rolling this out on a larger scale for Council and School staff be considered.

Service Change

3. To develop and publish a SEN communication policy which makes it clear to parents and carers how and when the authority will communicate with them regarding their children.
4. Consideration to be given to how to include the parental voice within the panel process, e.g. allowing parents to attend their own Child's SEND Panel, in the interests of openness and transparency.
5. That formal minutes be taken at Panel Meetings which are compliant with public law (taken in a prescribed way, circulated for approval, and then approved) and made available to those involved in the process.
6. That a leaflet be created for parents with the contact details of Trafford Parents Forum and PYPPS
7. That work group be formed to consider innovative ways the Council can work with schools to support them in being more inclusive, e.g. support schools to gain the Inclusion Quality Mark. That this group is to include Officers from the Council and School Staff.
8. That the Council look at how additional support can be given to PYPPS to increase their capacity and utilise the service more.

Service Review

9. That a full review of all documentation relating to SEND in the authority be conducted to ensure that all wording is clear and concise.
10. That early signposting for parents be reviewed to ensure that there is easy access to all necessary information.

11. That a full review of EHC Assessments be conducted, including a comparison with other Councils' and independent assessments, and that the review be carried with the support of independent experts.

Further work of the Task and Finish Group

12. That the Executive support the Task and Finish Group to look in further depth at the following aspects of SEND in Trafford;
 - SEND Tribunals including mediation and use of barristers,
 - EHCP assessments and reports, referrals, EHCP annual reviews,
 - The Councils provision of SEND training for staff (including school staff)
 - Exclusions within Trafford
 - In-borough SEND Provision
13. That the Task and Finish Group be supported in reviewing the Council's Mediation process.
14. That the Task and Finish group be supported in reviewing what happens in cases where an EHC Plan assessment is not needed but it is recognised that the child requires a different form of support.
15. That the task and finish group be supported in conducting an anonymised survey with EHC staff

Request for Information

16. That the task and finish group be supplied with referral data, including those received from parents, so that they can look at trends within the area.
17. That the Task and Finish group be informed of the training, especially legal training, given to staff involved in conducting EHCP assessments and writing EHCPs.
18. That full process maps and customer journeys for each stage of the EHCP process be provided for the Task and Finish group, if these are not available then they should be developed in collaboration with TPF and PYPSS.
19. That the Task and Finish Group be provided with a breakdown of the time it took for the Council to issue EHC plans in 2018 and to date in 2019.
20. That a report on the causes of the delay in issuing EHC Plans, including proposed improvements, be provided to the Task and Finish group.
21. That the Task and Finish group are to be given a random selection of anonymised EHC plans so that they can look at the standard.

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