



8 NOV 2019

PROGRAMME UPDATE

Keeping stakeholders, parents and carers informed about Dudley's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Improvement Programme

Welcome

Welcome to the first SEND Improvement Programme briefing note for all stakeholders, parents, carers and families, following Ofsted's and Care Quality Commissions Joint Area Inspection findings which were published this summer. This briefing is aimed at all stakeholders, parents and carers to keep them informed about Dudley's SEND Improvement Journey.

We know that every child or young person deserves the very best, but we also recognise that we do not yet deliver this on a consistent basis in Dudley. In the summer inspectors found a number of areas of significant weakness in addition to some areas of strong practice.

We were reassured that the inspectors echoed our self-evaluation and understanding of areas for improvement and we fully accept their findings. We know that there is a lot to do. Over the last few months we have been developing our action plan ensuring that it now takes account of all the feedback in the report.

1. Changes at the Local Authority

Dudley Council is today announcing exciting new changes to its strategic leadership of SEND.

Improving the SEND offer for our children and young people is now a clear priority for the council and with this heightened focus Dudley Council has taken the opportunity to review the leadership arrangements overseeing the SEND improvement programme.

A new **Interim Director Children's Services, Catherine Knowles**, has recently joined the authority. Catherine comes to Dudley with a wealth of experience in Children's Services and delivering Children's Social Care. She will be focusing on the council's ongoing priorities, improving our Special Education Needs provision and continuing our journey to excellence for Children's Services.

One of the first actions has been to move the SEND Agenda in to Children's Services from Dudley Disability Service.



Catherine Knowles, Interim Director for Children's Services

In addition, a new post of **Interim Assistant Director with lead responsibilities for Education, SEND and Family Solutions** has been created in order to enhance the strategic vision and oversight of the Education and SEND improvement programme whilst ensuring that improvements are carried out at pace.

Former Interim Chief Officer for Children's Services, **Helen Ellis** has now taken up this role and will ensure that the improvement journey is given the focus that is required along with partners in health and the community.

Other changes at the council include the departure of Len Brazier, Nominated Officer for SEND.

We have also appointed **Sue Powell**, formerly Family Centre Manager at Dudley Central as overall **SEND Manager**; Sue will be based at the council's Ladies Walk, Sedgley Offices.

Finally, within the SEND Team we have now appointed a new permanent **SEND Team Manager, Rob Bennett** and we will be starting a consultation on the restructure of the council's SEND Team shortly which will be designed to ensure that we are focussing on robust management, quality case management, effective complaints/tribunal management and good specialist advanced practitioner and business support. Through this improvement journey children and families will be placed firmly at the heart of everything we do.



Helen Ellis, Interim Assistant Director with lead responsibilities for Education, SEND and Family Solutions

2. Ofsted Written Statement of Action (WSOA)

Dudley's Written Statement of Action will outline how and when we are going to improve our SEND offer

On the 16 July 2019 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission published their [Joint Area Inspection Report](#) on the borough's SEND offer and services.

Following on from this inspection we were required to submit a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) or action plan outlining how we are going to improve our offer across the board over the next 18 months.

Our Written Statement of Action has been designed around the fourteen areas of concern raised by the inspectors and was co-produced with our partners including the council, Dudley Parent Carer Forum, Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group and Youth Justice. The Written Statement of Action was submitted to Ofsted on the 15 October and details how we will see rapid improvement in a number of areas including better identifying and assessing needs, creating a better understanding of inclusion, improved communication with parents, developing joint commissioning plans, and improving post-19 provision for young adults with additional needs as well as helping young people with SEND into work.

Ofsted's response to our Written Statement of Action has been positive and detailed but they have asked us to undertake some additional detailed work over the next few weeks and resubmit by 26th November 2019.

We will be regularly meeting with Department for Education (DfE) advisor Charlie Palmer to discuss our approach and receive advice on the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) and our improvement journey. We are likely to be re-visited by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, usually around 18 months after the

statement has been approved to monitor our progress against the plan, during which time we will be subject to a minimum of four support and challenge visits to the local area by DfE and NHS England advisers.

3. SEND Improvement Programme

We have now set up a programme office dedicated to delivering SEND improvement.

Two programme managers **Paul Klein** and **Simon Hickman** have been brought in to oversee the delivery of the Written Statement of Action and SEND Improvement Programme.

We have also set up a dedicated SEND Improvement Programme area on our Health and Wellbeing Board website www.dudleyhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/sendimprovement

In addition the governance structure has been created with the Children's Services Improvement Board, (chaired by Claire Burgess from the Local Government Association), as the designated authority and the SEND Implementation Group, (chaired by Helen Ellis), as the programme board with the Project Group being the weekly driving force for the Task and Finish Groups that are currently being defined.

The SEND Improvement Programme will:

- Deliver the aspirations of our SEND strategy that was launched earlier in the year
- Focus on the delivery of a sustainable SEND system
- Be outcomes and inclusion focused
- Will take a whole system approach
- Work in a co-production/partner driven way to deliver the programme
- Apply rigorous management and drive to delivery through programme governance
- Be scrutinised and held to account by the Children's Services Improvement Board

4. Next Steps Together

What are our next actions on our improvement journey?

Working together we need to swiftly develop enhanced and improved communication and involvement across all partners, parents, carers and young people to agree timely, tailored and robust mechanisms by which all stakeholders are able to access and understand where we are at with the programme and hold us to account, as well as having clear opportunities to design future services. To this end we anticipate that we will be consulting on a draft communication strategy by the end of November and have a full communication plan in place by December.

Over the coming weeks we also will be finalising the Improvement Programme governance membership to ensure clear accountability across the system.

The SEND Implementation Group will continue to focus on:

- Reviewing and consolidating the programme deliverables/plan as well as defining the outcomes and benefits of the programme
- Undertaking risk and issue review across the system
- Reaffirming governance and accountability across the system
- Finalising and implementing the Written Statement of Action

We know there is a lot to do and we will need to work openly, honestly and closely with parents, carers and partners to ensure good provision of services for all children and young people with SEND.

A SEND Improvement Programme Briefing Note will be issued regularly until the end of the year and then the frequency will be reviewed following the approval of the communications plan.

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