

SEND Written Statement of Action - Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group

Minutes - 27 September 2022

Attendance

Members of the SEND Written Statement of Action - Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group

Councillor Adam Collinge
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre
Councillor Stephanie Haynes
Councillor Louise Miles
Councillor Rita Potter

Officers

Mr Martin Stevens DL (Senior Governance Manager)
Brenda Wile (Deputy Director of Education)
Helen Blakewell (Head of Service Inclusion and Empowerment)
Julia Cleary (Scrutiny and Systems Manager)
Laura Noonan (Electoral Services Manager)

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies for Absence**
There were no apologies.

- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
Cllr Adam Collinge declared an interest as a Governor of Aldersley High School.

- 3 **Purpose of Meeting**
The Chair outlined the agenda for the meeting.

- 4 **Terms of Reference including Membership of Group**
The Terms of Reference were discussed. A Member recommended that people should be invited to attend meetings when appropriate to give evidence.

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Strong Families, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel that there be one extra Labour Group Member appointed to the SEND Written Statement of Action – Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group.

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Strong Families, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel that they ask their Co-opted Members if they wish to be Co-opted onto the Group (Up to 2 Co-opted Members permitted)

5 Ofsted outcome letter following SEND Inspection

The Deputy Director remarked that Ofsted had found six areas for improvement which were described in their letter. She outlined the six areas. There was an action plan which incorporated these areas and additionally other areas which Ofsted did not reference.

A Member of the Group suggested that sharing of best practice amongst academy schools should be done more.

6 Written Statement of Action

The role of the SEND Partnership Board was discussed. A Member congratulated the Deputy Director of Education and the team for bringing partners together on the SEND Partnership Board.

The Deputy Director commented that the vast majority of areas had a Written Statement of Action. It brought people together and raised the priority.

There was discussion regarding funding for Schools and how staff could access training on SEND. A Member commented that the Governors of Schools needed to ensure that staff received training and allocated funding when required.

A Member commented they would be interested in some comparative work on Written Statement of Actions (WSOA) with other authorities. This would help to determine best practice in responding to the WSOA.

It was believed In July there were only 6 EHCP's Assessments that had exceeded the 30-week deadline. In August there was only one. The Action Plans beneath the WSOA included the Wolves at Work information requested from Full Council.

The Head of Service Inclusion and Empowerment stated that the WSOA had been approved by Ofsted in it's first version to them, this was not the case with many other authorities.

7 Monitoring Visits

The Deputy Director of Education confirmed that the next monitoring visit would take place in November 2022. She expected there to be another monitoring visit in March 2023 and a further one in July or September 2023. The conclusion of the monitoring visit in June 2022 had been that Wolverhampton had demonstrated they had put in place the effective strategic leadership, partnership working and co-production to support the Written Statement of Action.

The Deputy Director of Education remarked that Ofsted had fed back the key question to ask was "What was different now." This is what they would be focusing on for the November visit, providing feedback and case studies from stakeholders so Ofsted had assurance.

There was a discussion about whether the IT issues and the restructure would be completed by the November visit. Officers responded that they hoped the IT issues would be much improved but some of the recruitment might go on beyond November due to some people having to serve three months' notice.

The Deputy Director of Education stated she could bring another Highlights report in December to the Review Group.

A Member stated he would be interested to read the SEND Board Minutes. The Deputy Director of Education responded she would make them publicly available.

8 **Highlight reports - September 2022**

The Head of Service Inclusion and Empowerment went through the key points in the Highlights Report – September 2022.

The deadline had been extended for certain actions as the original plan had been too ambitious. The current published report was marked at risk because some of the programmes had not been completed. She detailed the areas as per the report, which had not yet been completed. She also went through the risks identified as per the report. At the time of the published report the overall improvement programme was at risk but as it was now on track.

A Member asked if the new IT system was in place. The Head of Service Inclusion and Empowerment responded that she hoped it would be fully in place by March. Training was taking place over the coming months. There was an interim solution in place.

The Deputy Director of Education highlighted commissioning as the biggest area of concern. The restructure was not yet settled with the SEND Commissioning Team. The Head of Service Inclusion and Empowerment added that EHCP's were still an area of risk. The Capita One Project was also a risk. Overall though the situation was positive and they were on track.

9 **Preparation for Adulthood update**

The Deputy Director of Education gave an update on preparation for Adulthood. Positively, every 14-year-old with an Education, Care and Health Plan now had a pathway plan completed at 14 with a connection advisor who was an expert in SEND and the opportunities available. Two new SEND advisors were also being recruited. In addition Connections had appointed two new SEND advisors. An event was taking place in December for which all SEND children and their parents were being invited.

Members paid tribute to Julia Cleary, the Scrutiny and Systems Manager who was leaving the Council at the end of the month.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting.