

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

Date: Monday 13th December, 2021
Time: 10.30 am
Venue: Virtual Meeting

Please note this is a virtual meeting.

**The meeting will be livestreamed via
the Council's YouTube channel at
[Middlesbrough Council - YouTube](#)**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes - Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel - 8 November 2021 3 - 10
4. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - Further Evidence 11 - 20

The Scrutiny Panel will receive:

- a record of the points discussed with Parents4Change, following an informal meeting with the Chair and Vice-Chair on 23 November 2021;
- details of how children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families are fully involved in discussions and decision-making about the services and the support they receive through meaningful and ongoing co-production; and
- case studies that demonstrate how the views, wishes and feelings of the child/young person and their parents have impacted on the delivery of services and support.

5. Education and Covid-19 Recovery

The Executive Director of Children's Services will provide a verbal update.

6. Overview and Scrutiny Board - An Update

The Chair will present a verbal update on the matters that were considered at the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 9 November and 7 December 2021.

7. Any other urgent items which in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.

Charlotte Benjamin
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall
Middlesbrough
Friday 3 December 2021

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors D McCabe (Chair), L Mason (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, D Jones, T Mawston, M Nugent, M Saunders, P Storey and G Wilson

Assistance in accessing information

Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Georgina Moore, 01642 729711, georgina_moore@middlesbrough.gov.uk

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 8 November 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors D McCabe (Chair), L Mason (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, T Mawston, M Nugent, M Saunders and G Wilson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: G Brown, J Brownsell and N Mount

OFFICERS: R Brown, S Butcher, C Cannon, T Dunn, D Johnson, J Kitchen, G Moore and K Smith

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors D Jones and P Storey

21/27 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor A Hellaoui	Non-Pecuniary	Items 4 and 5, member of three governing bodies

21/28 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 4 OCTOBER 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 4 October 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

21/29 **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) - FURTHER EVIDENCE**

A number of officers and representatives from early years settings were in attendance to provide the scrutiny panel with:

- an overview of how early years providers work with the Local Authority to identify and support children with SEN or disabilities and promote equality of opportunity for children in their care

The Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service advised that the SEND Code of Practice 0-25 stated that early years providers were required to have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities. Those arrangements needed to include a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEN. The benefits of early identification were widely recognised - identifying need at the earliest point, and then making effective provision, improved long-term outcomes for children. It was highlighted that further information on the benefits of early identification was detailed in the submitted report.

It was highlighted that local authorities were required to ensure that there was sufficient expertise and experience amongst local early years providers to support children with SEN. Local authorities often made use of local area SEN Coordinators to provide advice and guidance to early years providers, on the development of inclusive early learning environments. The submitted report included information on the work that had been undertaken to develop provision for children with SEND. An outreach model had been developed, which involved the Early Years and Primary Support Service (EYPSS) visiting early years settings to develop the skills and knowledge of staff members, ensuring more children were able to access mainstream provision. As a result of that work, there had been a significant increase in the number of children with SEND accessing mainstream provision and a reduction in those needing to access the local area's specialist provision at the Cleveland Unit, which had been previously based at James Cook University Hospital and was now based at Hemlington Initiative Centre. The re-location had occurred as a result of the pandemic.

Members were informed that, across Middlesbrough, there were 38 Private, Voluntary & Independent (PVI) settings and 42 school nurseries. There were also 21 full-time equivalent places across 5 specialist assessment nurseries. Those included two special schools, two mainstream schools with resource bases and the Cleveland Unit, which was a Child Development Centre and had been judged by Ofsted as Outstanding 5 times in a row.

The Early Years and Primary Inclusion Lead advised that the EYPSS worked with children from birth until 11 years old. The service was delivered by the Local Authority, however, a multi-agency approach had been adopted. Most importantly, the child and their family were involved/consulted, in addition to health colleagues (e.g. health visitors, speech and language therapists, consultant pediatricians and GPs etc.) and early years settings/schools. The aim of the service was to identify needs at the earliest opportunity, provide early assessment, deliver interventions to promote the best outcomes for each child and their family, support inclusion in a mainstream setting of parents' choice (where possible) and identify the most appropriate setting if an alternative was necessary.

All the work of the EYPSS was based around the model - Assess, Plan, Do, Review. Initially, parents/carers/families were consulted to identify the needs of the child and determine the support that was required. Prior to the child attending an educational setting, work was undertaken to upskill parents/carers to enable them support learning and development.

Initially, an assessment was undertaken of the child's needs, following that parents/carers and the child were invited to multi-disciplinary family groups. Those groups provided assessment, information, advice and guidance to support and upskill parents/carers. The group took a Portage approach, which was a model of support for children and families that could be adapted and used effectively both in the home and in early years settings. The purpose of the approach was to build on identified strengths to support needs. The approach also placed great importance on support for parents and carers. It was highlighted that if parents felt unable to attend a group session, the approach was adapted and home visits were undertaken.

Once parents/carers had identified their preferred early years setting, the EYPSS worked in partnership with parents/carers, the early years setting and other professionals to ensure a smooth transition into and out of the nursery provision.

In terms of the pathway, the main professionals that were involved with the EYPSS were health professionals, health visitors and early years settings. It was commented that referrals to Portage could be made for children prior to them attending an early years setting, by any professional or practitioner working with a pre-school child who had significant concern about their learning or development.

In some instances, an early years setting would make the referral. It was commented that a referral from a setting could be a result of a child moving into the area at a later stage in their lives or their needs may not present at an early age, e.g. children with communication difficulties or on the autistic spectrum.

Once a referral had been received, a multi-disciplinary assessment would be undertaken, with key professionals involved with the child. Once the assessment had been undertaken, children and their families would become involved in intervention groups, based on the Portage model. The child was then provided with support to transition to the early years setting. Once the child was attending a setting, ongoing support and monitoring was provided. The EYPSS provided settings with training, teaching strategies, loans of specialist equipment and resources, additional funding etc. The support offered was continuously revisited and reviewed with parents/carers and the setting.

Members were advised that professionals from three early years settings were in attendance to provide case studies in respect of early years partnership working in Middlesbrough.

The SEND Coordinator at **Green Lane Primary Academy** advised that the school was a large primary school, which had 688 pupils on roll. Approximately 6.5% of pupils were registered as having SEND. However, it was highlighted that since 2016, only one child transitioning from nursery to reception had been transferred from the school to specialist provision.

There were currently 61 children attending the school's nursery and, since the beginning of the academic year, a number of children had been identified as having SEN. It was added that, through discussion with parents, those children had been entered onto the SEND Register.

To support children, nursery staff had:

- completed training on manual handling and peg feeding;
- worked alongside physiotherapists and occupational therapists; and
- gained advice on feeding from a dietician;

It was also added that the EYPSS had been an invaluable resource. The EYPSS had provided opportunities for the child to progress and enjoy the setting and had also provided staff members with confidence to care for the child and deliver effective support.

Members were advised that the partnerships formed during the early years provide a solid foundation for future years. The school worked tirelessly to support its children and it was committed to working with key individuals and professionals, such as families, the EYPSS, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, health visitors etc.

In terms of future plans, the SEND Coordinator continually reviewed and developed SEND provision within the school. The SEND Coordinator continued to attend training provided by the Local Authority's SEND Team and held staff meetings and twilight training with a focus on SEND.

It was also added that the effect of the pandemic and the extended lockdowns had brought to light the limited interactions of children, which had impacted on learning and development.

Case Study - Prior to the child starting nursery in 2019, the child had been involved in a joint education and therapy group. Due to the needs of the child, a multi-disciplinary team had been formed which ultimately allowed for the school to ensure the necessary provision was in place. The parent had conveyed a wish for their child to remain in a mainstream school. It was highlighted that initially, school staff had expressed some apprehension about the severity of the child's needs.

The setting facilitated visits for the child and the parent. To enable advanced planning, in February 2019 a multi-disciplinary team meeting was held. At the meeting, staff training needs were identified, which enabled staff members to start accessing training. Visits to the setting were also completed with the EYPSS, a physiotherapist and an occupational therapist.

The EYPSS had enabled the school to access Inclusion Development Funding and that funding was utilised to employ an additional member of staff to assist with meeting the needs of the child and to conduct specialist interventions. That member of staff was instrumental in enabling the child to access mainstream provision. Regular multi-disciplinary team meetings were held to review the impact of the support and to monitor progress.

Following agreement with the child's parent, a planning meeting had been held and the child was referred for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessment. It was confirmed that the referral for an assessment did not result in an EHCP as the parent had requested for the mainstream placement to continue. In addition, the child's needs were being met without a plan.

When the child moved from nursery to reception, the school had been successful in securing High Needs Funding. It was commented that the EYPSS, a physiotherapist and occupational therapist had visited the reception class to support staff members and ensure that specialist equipment and resources were accessible.

In terms of what worked well, the following areas were highlighted:

- the needs of the child had been identified in a timely manner, at the earliest of stages;
- agencies worked together to plan a smooth transition into nursery and multi-disciplinary team meetings and physical visits to the setting took place;
- multi-disciplinary team meetings meant that the child's needs could be discussed and planned for holistically, with shared ownership;
- the positive partnership working with the EYPSS, physiotherapist, occupational

- therapist, dietician and speech and language therapist;
- training and modelling of strategies built the confidence of staff members; and
- using Inclusion Development Funding to employ an additional member of staff to assist with meeting the needs of the child and to conduct specialist interventions.

It was commented that inclusion had enabled Green Lane Primary Academy to fulfil a parent's request of mainstream provision. It was also added that the quality and level of inclusion would never have been possible without the collaborative working and determination of the key professionals involved with the child.

In summary, identifying the child's needs at the earliest point and then making effective provision had ensured that the child was:

- settled and happy in school;
- making good progress;
- mixing with peers; and
- learning to communicate his needs.

The SEND Coordinator for **Caldicotes Primary Academy** advised that the school had 270 children on roll. The school had a large early years setting, with a 2 year old provision and a nursery setting. There were 55 children within the early years setting and 10 of those children had been identified as having speech and language needs and were currently on the SEND Register. The main areas of need, in the setting, were speech and language needs.

Within the setting, training was provided and staff members had individualised development plans. Developing individualised plans empowered staff members to deliver effective provision for children. The support provided by the EYPSS in delivering training was commended. Recent training had been delivered in respect of supporting children with communication difficulties/delay, sensory processing and positive handling.

In terms of partnerships, the school had developed positive working relationships with families, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and the EYPSS. It was commented that the school was currently looking to refer two children, in its early years setting, to the EYPSS.

In respect of the future plans, the school planned to further strengthen relationships with outside agencies and access more specific training to enable staff to support more children with a range of SEND needs.

Case study - The child had previously joined a different school nursery and as soon as the child started to attend Caldicotes Primary Academy, staff members immediately contacted the EYPSS. At first the child was finding it difficult to access the setting and staff members had admitted that they required additional training to deliver effective support for the child. The training and the specialist/professional advice received by staff members, from the EYPSS, had been vital in enabling staff members to support the child's progress and outcomes.

It was commented that, alongside the support received from the EYPSS, Inclusion Development Funding had been secured. The funding enabled the school to employ an additional member of staff to help meet the child's needs and deliver specialist interventions. The additional member of staff enabled the child to access the setting and access learning.

To further support the child, an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessment had been undertaken. As a result of that assessment, the child received an EHCP, which identified appropriate support required in school. It was also commented that following visits from speech and language therapists to the setting, the child now had a diagnosis of autism.

With support of the EYPSS, transition visits to reception had taken place. It was commented that the child remained supported in mainstream provision, with additional funding. The importance of upskilling staff members was highlighted.

In terms of what worked well, the SEND Coordinator explained that:

- the setting had experienced early years staff;
- effective partnership working was in place with social care, speech and language therapists and the EYPSS; and
- Inclusion Development Funding enabled an additional member of staff to deliver

effective interventions and strategies to support the child.

In respect of the impact of partnership working:

- the child was settled, making excellent progress and was able to communicate choices/preferences and join in group times with peers;
- the child was now able to benefit from lessons that were once inaccessible;
- the child's SEND needs did not define her or her educational journey;
- the family was supported at home; and
- working with EYPSS had strengthened practice and provided staff members with valuable skills that enabled them to care and support other children with SEND.

It was commented that enabling the child to communicate choices and preferences had been a great achievement, given that the child communicated non-verbally.

The SEND Coordinator for **Rosedene Easterside** advised that the nursery was a PVI setting. There were currently 98 children on roll. 10 of those children had been placed on the SEND Register, 8 were known to EYPSS and there had also been two recent referrals. All 10 children had been presenting with communication delay and some were on the autism pathway.

In terms of SEND training, the EYPSS had delivered training and modelling of strategies. Staff members had accessed distance learning courses on autism and communication training from speech and language therapists. It was also added that in-house training had been delivered by the setting's SEND Lead.

The nursery cared for children from the age of 6 months old and was very much focused on early intervention. Effective partnerships had been developed with the EYPSS, speech and language therapists, health visitors and social workers.

It was commented that, in terms of future plans, the nursery would continue to prioritise SEND training for new staff across its 10 settings. The importance of helping staff members to have an understanding that some children present differently and working to identify delays/difficulties quickly, following the pandemic, was highlighted. Supporting parents throughout their journey, as well as children, was also identified as a priority.

Case study - the child joined the nursery in January 2021. Once the child started at the setting, it became apparent that the health visitor two-year-old progress check had been delayed due to the pandemic. Therefore, the child's needs had not been identified prior to him starting at the nursery. Initial assessments undertaken by the nursery staff had identified communication delays, as the child was non-verbal, and difficulties with learning and development. The child was also struggling to attend the nursery for a full session, due to his lack of social interaction. The nursery worked with his parent, to make the appropriate adjustments and monitor his progress. In March 2021, as the required progress had not been made, the EYPSS and a speech and language therapist were consulted.

In April 2021, an initial assessment of the child was undertaken by the EYPSS at the setting. The EYPSS also shared strategies with staff members. In June 2021, Inclusion Development Funding was secured, which enabled the nursery to employ an additional member of staff to help the whole team meet the child's needs and deliver specialist interventions. The child's parent had also applied for, and now received, Disability Living Allowance for the child. It was commented that referral had been made for an autism assessment and the child had been referred to a consultant paediatrician.

The parent had previously expressed a wish for the child to remain in mainstream provision for as long as possible. The nursery and EYPSS were working collectively to produce an EHCP to identify the type of provision that would best support his needs when he started in reception. There was an ongoing daily review of impact and progress. In addition, support was provided to the parents when considering the next steps.

In terms of what worked well, the SEND Coordinator advised that:

- the setting had already established a good relationship with the family, as siblings of the child had attended the nursery;
- the needs of the child had been identified early, enabling the setting to access support quickly from various services, including the EYPSS and speech and language

- therapists, the GP and pediatrician;
- the funding had provided extra support in nursery; and
- training the whole team had upskilled staff members.

It was commented that, throughout the pandemic, parents had commended the work of the EYPSS and the support it provided.

The impact of the partnership work had ensured that:

- the child had been referred and signposted to the appropriate professionals and agencies for assessment and support, including EHCP assessment and autism assessment;
- the parent received ongoing support and had been supported to consider at an early point, the most appropriate support and provision for child in the future; and
- the child was settled and happy in the setting, attendance had improved and he was making progress, babbling and repeating some words.

The Early Years and Primary Inclusion Lead commented that the impact of the pandemic had been severe for early years settings, given the delay in children receiving specialist assessments. Therefore, the need for effective partnership working to identify needs at the earliest of stages was paramount.

A Member raised a query in respect of the fast-track referral, the Early Years and Primary Inclusion Lead commented that when a child had been known to the EYPSS previously, the fast-track referral merely provided consent for the EYPSS to visit and work with the setting. The fast-track referral ensured support from the EYPSS could be delivered quickly.

A Member raised a query about the Inclusion Development Funding. In response, the Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service advised that:

- the Local Authority had access to High Needs Funding and Inclusion Development Funding and there was clear guidance on how that funding should be utilised;
- the Local Authority produced reports for the Schools Management Forum, involving early years settings, schools and post-16 settings, which provided a detailed account of how the funding had been used;
- moderation panels scrutinised the allocation of funding;
- the Local Authority had meetings with the DfE to ensure that the funding was being allocated in line with published guidance;
- the Local Authority completed annual returns to explain how funding had been allocated to provide specialist support based on the needs of children; and
- nationally, work was being undertaken to ensure there was sufficient High Needs Funding and to address deficits in local areas.

A Member raised a query in respect of the impact of the pandemic. In response, the Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service advised that, in terms of health, there had been a significant increase in children being referred for speech and language support. In respect of health assessments, the Early Years and Primary Inclusion Lead advised that some delays had been experienced as key health professionals involved in assessments had been required to undertake work to respond to the pandemic. However, those delays were now being addressed. The EYPSS had encountered a short period whereby face-to-face assessments with children were not permitted, however, that did not impact on children accessing the right support as during that period remote support was provided. It was added that multi-disciplinary meetings were now held, in advance of a child receiving a diagnosis, to ensure that specialist provision could be arranged.

In response to a Member's query regarding childminders, the Early Years and Primary Inclusion Lead advised that the EYPSS was available to all early years settings, including PVI settings. It was commented that generally, given the limited number of children they care for, childminders tended to access advice, guidance and training from the EYPSS rather than funding. It was confirmed that no childminders had previously requested funding from the EYPSS.

AGREED

That the information presented at the meeting be considered in the context of the

scrutiny panel's investigation.

21/30

EDUCATION AND COVID-19 RECOVERY

The Executive Director of Children's Services advised that a letter had been send out to schools at beginning of term, advising that a 'business as usual but with caution' approach could be taken. It was added that schools were advised to continue to promote hygienic practices and observe of social distancing where possible.

The Head of Achievement advised that the 12-15 vaccination roll-out was underway, however, there had been delays encountered. The timescale of November had lapsed, therefore, January 2022 had been identified for full rollout. Only 11% of 12-15 year olds had been vaccinated in Middlesbrough and public health was working tirelessly to address that. Alongside the school roll-out, the NHS was encouraging families to approach their GPs for vaccinations. All secondary schools had been fully briefed and were engaged with the vaccination roll-out, however, only 2 schools had been able to take part in the programme so far, due to national delays.

NOTED

21/31

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE

The Chair advised that at the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, held on 20 October 2021, the Board had considered:

- the Executive Forward Work Programme;
- an update from the Executive Member for Regeneration;
- an update from the Chief Executive;
- updates from the Scrutiny Chairs;
- the final report of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel on Cultural Events in Middlesbrough;
- the Revenue and Capital Budget - Projected Outturn Position as at Quarter One 2021/2022;
- the Strategic Plan 2021-2024 - Progress at Quarter One 2021/2022; and
- scrutiny chairs' training.

NOTED

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Informal Meeting with Parents4Change

23 November 2021

Attendees

Parents4Change

Kath Allison - Chair of Parents4Change
Kath Mellor - Vice-Chair of Parents4Change
Ruth Johnson - Treasurer of Parents4Change
Nicola Pearson - Member of Parents4Change

Local Authority

Councillor Dennis McCabe - Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel
Councillor Luke Mason - Vice-Chair of Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel

Caroline Cannon - Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service
Kerrie Scraton - Head of Service for Children with Disabilities

Georgina Moore - Democratic Services Officer

Discussion

At the meeting, in summary, the following points were made:

- Parents4Change is a parent forum group. The group offers help and support to parents/carers of children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.
- Parents4Change has organised several conferences over the past few years, since the implementation of the SEND reforms. The next conference is scheduled for March 2022. Conferences are planned jointly by Parents4Change and the Local Authority. Each conference aims to provide important information, advice and guidance to parents/carers. The topics selected for discussion reflect the concerns of parents/carers, which have been reported to Parents4Change such as transport; the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The conference planned for March 2022 will primarily seek to improve co-production and encourage parents/carers to join the workstreams of the SEND Strategic Group. The conferences provide valuable information and are well attended by parents/carers across the town. To attend conferences, transport is provided by Parents4Change to those parents/carers who do not have access to a vehicle.
- Currently, a primary concern for parents/carers is transport, due to a shortage of drivers. Although school transport is being provided to enable children to access education, arranging transport to access respite care is proving difficult.
- Parents4Change is involved in the SEND Strategic Group and its workstreams. By working in partnership with the Local Authority and Health, Parents4Change has been involved with developing and reviewing:
 - the SEND Strategy and sharing it with families;
 - the EHCP process, updating paperwork and introducing a single point of contact for parents/carers;
 - the neurodevelopment pathway, which is a new pathway to support children and young people who are on the autistic spectrum;
 - the Local Offer to produce a directory, improve the accessibility of information and advertise the support and advice available for parents/carers;
 - a Parents4Change newsletter aiming to recruit new members to the group, highlight issues raised by parents/carers and provide information on the Local Offer and drop-in sessions;

- the speech and language pathway;
- the framework for short breaks and the commissioning process for identifying providers;
- the eligibility criteria for children with disabilities;
- the early years service to provide greater support in the community and increase the number of children and young people with SEND being educated in mainstream provision; and
- supported internships in the local area to assist with getting young people with additional needs into work.

Parents4Change provides constructive challenge to the Local Authority and Health and the forum's input enables the local area to identify problems and implement solutions, ensuring families are well supported in Middlesbrough.

Parents4Change is a vital advocate of parents/carers and the work of the forum is commended. The involvement of Parents4Change in developing/improving services and practices is highly valued.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

13th December 2021

Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities

Caroline Cannon: Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Specialist Support Services

SUMMARY

- 1 The purpose of the paper is to provide details of how children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families are fully involved in discussions and decision-making about the services and the support they receive through meaningful and ongoing co-production.

INTRODUCTION

- 2 The Children and Families Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice 2014 (updated 2015 Appendix 1) pushed forward the Government's commitment to improve services for vulnerable children and young people and support strong families.
- 3 The Children and Families Act transformed the system for disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs, so that services consistently support the best outcomes for them. The reforms created a system from birth to 25 through the development of coordinated assessment and single Education, Health and Care Plans; improving cooperation between all services responsible for providing education, health or social care; and giving parents and young people greater choice and control over their support.
- 4 Within the SEND Code of Practice there is a clear focus on coproduction. Coproduction, when applied effectively to supporting children and young people (CYP) with SEND, enables the CYP, their parents and/or carers and professionals across multiple agencies and sectors working together as equal partners to design, plan, deliver and review support and services in order to achieve shared outcomes.
- 5 Coproduction recognises children and young people, parent carers and professionals as assets that all have important contributions to make due to their differing knowledge, skills and experience.
- 6 The SEND Code of Practice highlights the expectations of core principles that underpin all legislation and guidance related to SEND: It states that local authorities, in carrying out their functions in relation SEND, must have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents
 - the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions
 - the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes and preparing them effectively for adulthood.
- 8 Local authorities must consult children with SEN or disabilities, their parents, and young people with SEN or disabilities in reviewing educational and training provision and social care provision and in preparing and reviewing the Local Offer. It is important that they participate effectively in decisions about support available to them in their local area.
- 9 CCGs and health bodies must co-operate with local authorities in carrying out their functions, including those for providing information and advice. The joint commissioning arrangements that local authorities and CCGs must have for commissioning education, health and care provision for children and young people who have SEN or are disabled must include arrangements for considering and agreeing what information and advice about education, health and care provision is to be provided, by whom and how it is to be provided.
- 10 Partners must engage children and young people with SEN or disabilities and children's parents in commissioning decisions. Local authorities, CCGs and NHS England should develop effective ways of harnessing the views of their local communities so that commissioning decisions on services for those with SEN or disabilities are shaped by users' experiences, ambitions and expectations.
- 11 To support families and the development of services many local areas have a Parent Carer Forum. Parent Carer Forums are representative local groups of parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities who work alongside local authorities, education, health and other service providers to ensure the services they plan, commission, deliver and monitor meet the needs of children and families. Parent Carer Forums have been established in most local areas and local authorities are actively encouraged to work with them.

EVIDENCE/DISCUSSION

- 12 To support the implementation of the SEND reforms, services across education, health and social care worked closely with parents, young people and families to consider how best to implement the reforms across Middlesbrough. Themed working groups were set up to understand each aspect of the reforms and how to develop and implement these across the local area. Themed working groups continue to be in place across the local area and are reviewed based on key areas for development.

- 13 One of the initial focus key areas was the establishment of systems and processes for assessing needs, format of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) template and reviewing of EHCPs. Parents4Change Middlesbrough's local parent's forum were actively involved throughout this process and have been ever since. These processes have been reviewed over time to support on-going improvement and to continue to effectively capture the voice of the child/young person and parents/carers.
- 14 To further embed the Education, Health and Care Plan process a Rapid Improvement Week took place within Health to improve the understanding of Health Colleagues in relation to SEND. Parents4change were very involved in this intensive work and an impact of this work has seen information from Health colleagues which is used to support the EHCP process improve significantly. Health colleagues also reported that they have a better understanding of the process and feel more confident in their role.
- 15 Through the ongoing developments of the EHCP process we can see from our feedback from families that they feel fully involved in the process. We also need to consider that our rate of SEND tribunals in Middlesbrough is one of the lowest in the Country and it is felt that this is down to the robust systems developed in partnership with Parents4change, provides families with the opportunity to work together to share key information and plan for provision to meet needs.
- 16 Our parent's forum have been very involved in the designing and delivery of a range of training. This includes the EHCP process, voice of families and young people, autism awareness etc. Having our parents involved ensures the voice of families is clearly heard.
- 17 The local area SEND Strategy was developed in partnership with our parent's forum. This work included gathering feedback regarding key priorities and the actual designing of the strategy to ensure that it is accessible. The SEND Strategy has been further updated this year again with our parent's forum and is available on the Local Offer.
- 18 During the development of the local area SEND strategy in 2018 we also developed with families a short video. The video captures the voice of families, sharing their feedback regarding support they have received across education, health and care. The video was shared during our revisit in July 2019 and is on our Local Offer. To see the video please click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrQnZfArnHA> We will be creating a new video with families in 2022 which will be placed on the Local Offer
- 19 We have undertaken a lot of developments within Early Years to increase access and inclusion based on feedback from families. To support these developments we set up working groups which included members from Parents4Change. Feedback from families reported that they wanted their children to be able to attend their local nursery with other children and families from their community. Parents and carers, specialist settings, health and social care colleagues, also highlighted concerns with the number

of transitions from one setting to another, experienced by the youngest children. Some children experienced up to three different educational settings before their 5th birthday. Using our robust data, the Local Authority in partnership with Health and Education settings was able to relocate a number of the assessment nursery places into some of Middlesbrough's specialist settings. This not only spread the specialist assessment nursery places more widely across Middlesbrough but also doubled the number of nursery places in an Autism specific school, as well as creating new nursery places in a special school for children with Severe Learning Disabilities.

- 20 Feedback from our Parents forum indicated that we needed to have in place a Single Point of Contact where families could call and get the right information at the right time. This model was developed with representation from our parent's forum and has been in place since 2019. This model will be further reviewed in 2022.
- 21 Families also requested Drop-in Clinics in the community where families could come and ask questions, seek advice and support. These have been implemented and are facilitated by the Local Authority and Designated Clinical Officer (DCO). These continued virtually through COVID. Parents who have used these Clinics have found them very informative.
- 22 As a result of the Local Area Inspection in March 2017 it was identified that the Local Offer was not accessible and easy to use. To move this forward we implemented a work stream with membership from parents. A Lead Officer was appointed to develop the Local Offer. As a result of this work the Local Offer has been updated and is now more informative, accessible and user friendly. This allows families to have a better understanding of the resources and support that is available in Middlesbrough. We can see from our data that more and more families and stakeholders are using the Local Offer.
- 23 As a request from parents and carers the Local Offer work stream has also developed a Facebook Page which is used to inform families of the support that is available across the local area. This Facebook page is another means of communication for families and currently has 390 members.
- 24 Some families also asked for an email network to be set up where information could be shared. This has been actioned and currently has approximately 100 members.
- 25 To support participation of young people we have facilitated a number of events. These events have included:
 - a. The voice and influence conference where over 150 staff members attended. This conference was held in March 2019 and was hosted by the Children in Care Council.

- b. In 2019 the strategic Preparing for Adulthood task group hosted a young person's conference. The conference was specifically designed for young people with SEND, with interactive workshops to allow young people to share their thoughts in a variety of different ways and about a wide range of topics. The main themes of the feedback from young people were that they wanted greater opportunities for employment and independence, and to be supported to make their own decisions. Following the conference, this feedback was used to help shape services. One example of this is the work to support a greater number of young people into employment. In order to achieve this, we worked with local Post 16 providers to increase the number of supported internships available for young people with SEND. A supported internship is a programme of study where, instead of learning in a classroom environment, a young person learns the skills for employment in a workplace. In Middlesbrough, in 2016, there were 3 supported internships; last academic year there were 34. A further conference will take place in early 2022.

- c. At the conference, young people also told us how important it was to them to have their achievements celebrated. Many children and young people with SEND can have poor self-esteem and confidence as a result of their experiences. What young people wanted was an opportunity to be celebrated for their contribution. After hearing this, we organised a celebration event for the young people - an awards ceremony, designed to acknowledge the huge breadth of achievements of all young people. Young people were celebrated for their achievements in everything from employment to volunteering, to staying healthy and developing independence. The celebration event was held at Middlesbrough Town Hall and young people from across the town were invited, with their parents, carers and staff.

26 Within Health, the Children's Strategic Lead (Consultant Paediatrician) has overseen the following engagement projects with young people in South Tees Hospital Foundation Trust (STHFT). These include

- a. Young People have taken part in a transitions learning event, giving an account of their transitions journey and holding a questions and answers session.

- b. A DVD was produced in which parents and young people talked about the challenges they had faced during transition and any examples of good practice. This was shared at one of the Transitions Learning Events.

- c. A new menu has been developed for inpatients following tasting sessions and suggestions by young patients on the ward.
- d. Young people are involved in other aspects of service development such as improvements to the hospital website, developing information leaflets and offering peer support.

27 Families have been very involved in the development of the Joint Commissioning Strategy. This work included working closely with families in determining what they would wish to see in a joint commissioning strategy. The strategy focused on laying out the principles of how we would work to jointly commission services in the future including how we could involve children and young people fully in the commissioning process. This strategy will be further reviewed and updated in 2022. Work with families has also included:

- a. Re-shaping of the Speech and Language contract to ensure that it is more person centred and responds to individual needs. This contract is currently being further reviewed and developed.
- b. Development of a new neurodevelopmental pathway which was implemented in September 2021. This pathway will provide greater support for families of children who are on the autistic spectrum without the need for waiting for a diagnosis

28 Parents4change have been involved in the development of a specification for the short breaks provision framework. As part of this work Parents4Change were also involved in tender process the evaluation to ensure appropriate providers were approved and added to the framework.

29 Our Parents Forum have recently been involved in the development of the criteria for the Children with Disabilities Service. Through this process they have provided challenge and support to ensure the criteria is robust, relevant and clear for all.

30 Each Year there is a parent's conference where we work in partnership with our parent's forum to plan and design the conference. There have been many areas discussed and feedback sought at these conferences including SEND Strategy, High Needs Funding, Short Breaks, EHCP process, Health Services, Local Offer and Preparing for Adulthood. We are currently planning a conference to take place in March 2022 with an agreed focus on co production. This session will be facilitated by Participation People First who are currently working with the local authority on the Big Takeover (November 2021).

- 31 To enable Parents4change share key information with families across Middlesbrough the local authority supported the forum with funding for a consultant to help develop a Newsletter for families. This newsletter has information regarding key developments and events across the local area which families might find useful. It has also been developed to try and encourage new members to join the parent's forum.
- 32 Our parent's forum supported in the development of our new Data Outcomes Framework which was developed to collect data on progress for children and young people around softer outcomes identified within the EHCP. This is now embedded within our Annual Review paperwork and is seen as an example of good practice.
- 33 Based on feedback from our families and our parents forum we have developed more local provision for children who are autistic. We have worked with secondary colleagues to develop secondary mainstream Autism provision. A new base has been built on the Acklam Grange School site which now has 7 young people accessing this provision. This will rise to 16 over the next 3 years. We also worked with one of our Special Schools to develop a satellite provision for children and young people on the autistic spectrum with more complex needs. This has increased the number of places locally and will continued to be reviewed.
- 34 Alongside this our parents have been involved in the development of the neurodevelopmental pathway with Health which was launched in September 2021 providing greater support to children and young people and their families at the earliest of stages.
- 35 We continue to work closely with Post-16 providers to develop a range of provision which fully supports our young people as they move into adulthood. By doing so we have increased the range of Post 16 opportunities for young people with special needs. Feedback from young people has identified that they feel listened too and are accessing the provision which they feel meets their needs and prepares them for adulthood.
- 36 We are currently in the process of developing a SEND/Inclusion Hub in partnership with parents which will be based at Hemlington Initiative Centre. The Hub will be used for families to access training and support. There will also be an accessible kitchen for young people who are visually impaired to support with independent skills as they move into adulthood.
- 37 In November 2021 the local authority implemented the Big Takeover across Middlesbrough in partnership with Participation People. This work included young people with SEND. To support this work we had four young people from Priory Woods Special School who worked with the Strategic Lead for Inclusion and other key officers to consider and develop ways to further improve attendance of young

people at their EHCP meetings. The young people are currently seeking feedback from other young people and will provide key solutions which will be actioned across the service and settings.

38 We have recently developed a wider parent's partnership across the local area, inviting parents from key groups across Middlesbrough to join. This partnership will focus on key topics throughout the year where we will collect views from families on these topics and collectively analysis the feedback and agree areas for improvement.

39 Our parent's forum continue to be members of key work streams and task groups to support the development across the local area. These currently include SEND Strategic Leadership, Preparing for Adulthood, Local Offer, Data, Quality and Outcomes, Workforce Development, Early Years, Children with Sensory Loss, Transitions, Neurodevelopmental Pathway and Speech and Language Pathway. Alongside these work stream regular meetings are held with the Strategic Lead of Inclusion, Designated Clinical Officer from Health and the Interim Head of Children with Disabilities Team and our parent's forum to identify any areas of concern and to further strengthen our local partnership.

CONCLUSIONS

40 As a local area we recognise the importance of co-production and the impact of this work. We ensure that our families are fully involved in sharing their views, supporting developments and reshaping services. We continue to strengthen this process through engagement events, the Local Offer, surveys, Facebook Page, email network, newsletter, Drop-in-Clinics, membership of tasks groups, work streams and our SEND Strategic Group.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

41 SEND Code of Practice: Appendix 1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

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