

## Newcastle Local Area SEND Executive Board Briefing 22 April 2020

This meeting took place 'virtually' using Microsoft teams, given the current social distancing rules. The main focus of the meeting was to consider how SEND services are responding to the impact of COVID-19.

**School attendance:** All schools remain open for vulnerable learners and children of critical workers. On 17<sup>th</sup> April 286 pupils attended, 0.7% of all pupils. (Numbers have since increased, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1,020 pupils attended, 2.49% of all pupils).

**Risk assessments:** All schools in Newcastle have an assigned Single Point of Contact to provide support during this period. We are working with schools, settings and parents/carers to determine whether children and young people with SEND will be able to have their needs met at home and be safer at home, as opposed to expecting them to attend an educational setting. We are also seeking the views of the child or young person.

Council teams are making weekly calls to ensure that our most vulnerable children are safe and well. They have also shared education resources with families to support children's learning at home. The Children's Continuing Care team have risk assessed all the children on their caseload in Newcastle, which included a call to each family as well as receiving business continuity plans from providers. There has been flexibility towards Personal Health Budgets (PHBs) to allow for these challenging times.

**EHC assessments and annual reviews:** Our casework team are prioritising the completion of EHC needs assessments and producing EHC plans. We are expecting government guidance on the statutory assessment and annual review process during the school closure period.

**SEND home to school transport** continues to be available for pupils where needed.

Our [Local Offer](#) has further detail on how we are currently operating.

The CCG has additionally funded **St Oswald's Hospice** to support the provision of respite care and end of life care for our most vulnerable children and has worked to source PPE for the children with tracheostomies who would be the highest risk to PAs.

The council and CCG are having **weekly meetings** to ensure we keep a close eye on how things develop.

**SEND Strategy and Overview Plan:** We have updated the SEND Strategic Overview Plan and following the consultation brought forward the need to develop services for SEMH into year 1. The SEND Executive Board agreed reasonable extensions to some of the milestones in the plan. We will publish the plan once it is agreed by the CCG Executive Board. Going forward the Board requested regular updates to ensure officers are held to account.

**Local area score card:** The SEND Executive Board were assured that all performance indicators continue to be monitored. Our EHCP timescale performance, whilst getting better, is

still not good enough for our families. We are committed to improving and have commissioned a review of the entire process to see where the blockages are, and what we can do to improve.

Board members are concerned that they have not yet had full oversight of the data SALT, CYPs, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy to enable them to be fully informed of the quality and performance of service delivery and pose challenge where appropriate. The Joint Chairs are agreeing the best way forward. For the next meeting we are hoping to have a revised framework of how we present and review our data. We are looking to produce a revised SEND scorecard that shows a set of agreed outcomes across education, health and social care, including the outcomes on our written statement of action.

SEND profiles have been developed for each school that is represented on the Inclusion Sub-group. It is anticipated that the sharing of these profiles will enable challenge of performance on areas of concern such as exclusions and attendance.

**SALT update:** Our new SALT working arrangements have been postponed to the end of July. This was due to an NHS directive that all block contracts should be extended to allow hospitals to focus on Covid-19. The council has also extended its funding arrangements in line with these timescales.

**SALT delivery during COVID-19:** Except for physiotherapists, paediatric teams have not yet been redeployed to help with the expected increase in intensive care patients. This situation may change. The SALT service is continuing to provide support to children and young people and have set up a help/support line, covered from 9am-5pm on weekdays. The service is responding to urgent referrals, for children and young people who have swallowing difficulties.

The service has set up home working on Trust laptops with a rota, so staff are visible and accessible to families during the week but have some time away from the office to achieve social distancing. They are continuing to provide active caseload management by telephone and telehealth using 'starleaf' with parents. The service has provided social stories and visual timetables for home use for autism families and are contributing to EHC plans. The new arrangements are working well, as they have received some positive feedback from families.

**Commissioning agreements for ARCs /ARPs:** A draft commissioning agreement has been produced for ARCs/ARPs and following feedback from schools some amendments have been made which will enable more flexibility in placements. Revised documents will go back to the Inclusion sub-group and we anticipate they will be implemented in September 2020.

**Voice update:** The Board considered the feedback received from parents/carers, children and young people and a summary of the results is attached below:



what parent carers  
have told us april20, p



Children and young  
people have told us a

In response, we are compiling a 'you said we did' paper, which will be published on the local offer.

The Board discussed the Community Wellbeing Officer Post, which is a LA and CCG joint funded post. A paper is being presented to the CCG SEND Executive to request approval to extend the contract.

## Local offer

In response to feedback from families, we are looking at alternative providers for the content management system that runs our local offer. The initial step is to carry out a consultation with parents/carers and children and young people to identify the ideal local offer.

## Some things have had to be postponed

- SEND caseworkers training
- Headteachers training
- Post 16s conference
- PFA strategy group
- Relaunch of parent/carer forum

The Board acknowledged that this very important work will be continued as soon as it is safe to do so.

**Date of next SEND Executive Board meeting:** 24 June 2020