



31 JAN 2020

PROGRAMME UPDATE

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

1. Introduction from Helen Ellis – Assistant Director for SEND, Education and Family Solutions, Dudley Council

Welcome to our fourth SEND e-Bulletin that I hope will bring you up to date with developments as our improvement journey gathers pace. At a recent meeting facilitated by Working Together for Change, the Parent Carer Forum, I was able to reassure parents that improvements to the SEND system were a key priority across the council and with that we have made commitments to increase the size of the SEND team, thus providing additional resources to support our transformation and ensure that any changes made are sustainable.

Nationally the numbers of children and young people needing SEN support have increased, particularly since the Children and Families Act 2014 placed new duties on local health, social and education services. Dudley is no different and as a system we have identified a significant shortfall in the money the government provides to the local authority and schools (this is called the High Needs Block) to support our children and young people with special education needs and disabilities.

As a sector we are lobbying national government, but it is clear that that we need to manage our finite resources appropriately and that the right support is provided at the right time. In practice this means starting as early as possible to ensure that children are supported within mainstream schools and that we strive to support our children and young people in achieving their highest aspirations. We will strive to identify the right provision for every young person and sitting around this will be robust and transparent decision making processes and a package of support that will work with the family. We have a proud tradition of strong special schools in the borough which will be central to raising outcomes for pupils with SEND.

A couple of weeks ago we wrote to advise you that our Written Statement of Action has now been signed off by Ofsted. As you are aware, alongside this key document we are developing a system wide improvement programme and in doing so we will work openly, honestly and closely with parents, carers and partners to ensure good provision of services for all children and young people with SEND.

Finally, can I encourage as many people as possible who work with children and young people in Dudley and support the SEND system to take part in our stakeholder survey – [\(Please see Section 8\)](#). Your views are critical to our success.

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2. Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) update

The Dudley Multi-Speciality Community Provider – an Integrated Care Provider being commissioned by the CCG and the Council is a step nearer being implemented.

The proposed organisation, to be established as an NHS Trust is currently going through the regulatory approval process and is now scheduled to be established on 1 April 2020, before it holds its full contract on 1 October 2020.

This organisation will bring together a number of children's physical and emotional health services currently commissioned and provided separately. The contract it holds will be for a period of 10 years, linked to a set of outcomes, designed by CCG and Council colleagues. The longer contract period is designed to provide the organisation with the time and space to take those actions necessary to deliver long term health and care benefits for Dudley's whole population, through an approach based upon prevention and early intervention. When operational, this organisation will be a key vehicle for cementing in place the SEND reforms.

A new leadership team is being established by the Interim Chair, Harry Turner posts will be advertised shortly.

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3. Ofsted Written Statement of Action (WSOA) and Improvement Programme

On Friday 20th December 2019, the **Written Statement of Action (WSOA)** was officially signed-off by Ofsted. The document can be viewed [here](#).

Good progress is currently being made on the delivery of our commitments in the WSOA.

Firstly, the co-produced SEND communications strategy & plan, which regularly updates our stakeholders and partners on our progress to date, is complete. This provides a mechanism for feedback to us on how we are progressing in their eyes, particularly from Parents & Carers.

Our partners in health have successfully applied for extra resource to support the Designated Medical Officer in promoting the SEND agenda amongst our health providers. They are planning to have somebody in post by the end of March 2020.

The membership of the SEND Implementation Group has been expanded to include all partners including representation from the Parent Carer Forum.

The revised SEND Local Offer task and finish group has held its first meeting on 16th December and is currently co-producing requirements with all partners towards the first design draft for the end of January.

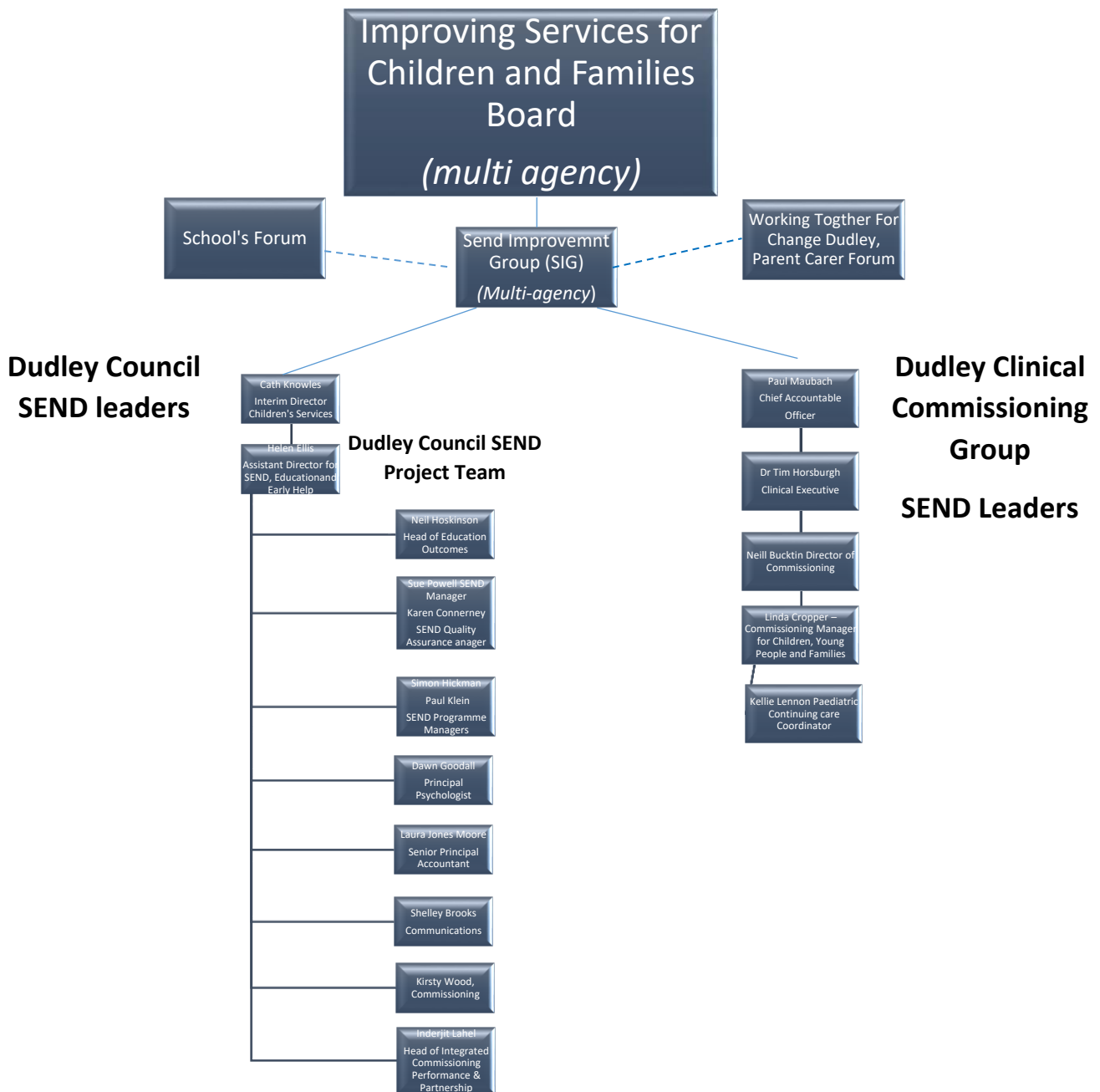
We are currently reviewing our Pathway for Adulthood (PFA). A task and finish group has been identified and will begin work with support from the national team at a workshop taking place on the 6th February.

Work has also begun on our EHCPs (education and health care plan). A task and finish group "A Good EHCP"- has been set up to improve the quality and relevance of the plans. A visioning workshop is being planned for all stakeholders on 28th February to launch the EHCP task and finish group, agree the scope, success criteria and the expected outcomes. We are working with the parent carer forum to identify parent carer reps and wish to put the invite out to schools. In particular we are also looking for senior leadership team reps from a nursery setting and secondary school. If you are interested in being part of this group please contact karen.connerney@dudley.gov.uk

We are currently exploring how we can contribute towards improving our financial performance through improving the demand forecasting. In addition, we have set-up a Joint Commissioning task and finish group

that held its first meeting on the 19th December and will be developing a 5 year joint commissioning plan, accompanied by an outcomes framework, to improve the outcomes of our SEND children and young people.

For clarification, we have also included a structure chart identifying the key leaders and governance arrangements for SEND across the system. See below:



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4. Parent Carer – Meeting with Helen Ellis facilitated by Dudley Parent Carer Forum, 'Working Together for Change'

Every two months the Assistant Director for SEND, Education and Family Solutions, meets with parents and carers, facilitated by Working Together for Change, to discuss the SEND improvement programme and to listen to their experiences of the system in order to implement positive change.

This month the focus of the discussion included the improvement programme and how as a system we are having to strip back and review all aspects.

The EHCP (education and health care plans) process was also discussed at length. Helen reassured the forum that there was going to be an increased permanent and appropriately trained and supported SEND team to deliver effective EHCP assessments, however the recruitment of this team was going to take a little while.

In addition, the forum were informed that there is going to be an EHCP task and finish group and that parents and carers will get the opportunity to be involved. The forum suggested that parents/carers should be kept informed during all stages of the process so that they were not kept in 'limbo'. Helen accepted that this must be the case and agreed to forward this onto the task and finish group.

The forum also raised the issue of reviews and what support is available if a child is assessed as not needing an EHCP.

Helen also accepted that all children who need an EHCP should have an accurate and up-to-date, quality EHC Plan. Any existing issues should be picked up through the annual review process. However, she acknowledged that the current system of review is not consistent and whilst a priority this will take time to resolve.

Other areas discussed were the time taken for some conditions to be diagnosed through the health system which was delaying support for their children. The group was advised of a meeting being held that they could attend about joint commissioning of future SEND services and also that they would invite the CCG to attend future forum meetings.

In addition, the forum was keen to ensure that all children with SEND who were attending specialist nurseries would have a school place from September 2020. Helen advised that additional resources have been identified to work as hard as possible to ensure that this is the case.

Further details of the meeting, future meetings dates (<https://careandshare.uk/welcome/dates-for-the-diary-2/>) and how to join Working Together for Change can be found at <https://careandshare.uk/welcome/become-a-member/>

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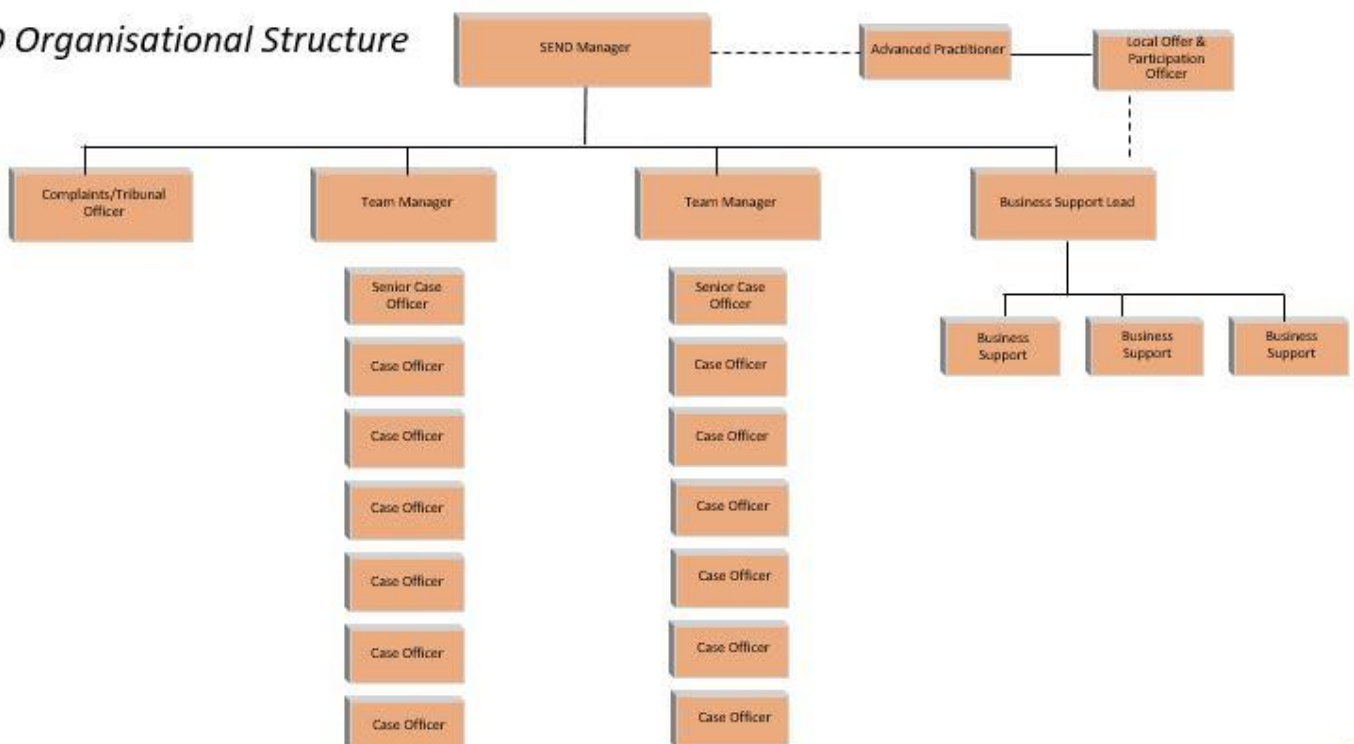
5. Dudley Council – SEND team update including structure chart

Recruitment for permanent positions is now well underway. Interviews are due to be held in January and February for advertised Case Officers and Complaints Tribunals Officer positions.

Interviews for the second Permanent Team Manager post were held (multi agency panel including parental representation) on Monday 27th January and we were delighted with the standard of applicants. We have verbally offered this position to a very experienced candidate. (Name to be confirmed once formal HR checks and formal offer has been made).

Whilst recruitment can take several months to complete, we have interviewed for and offered four secondment positions to staff working in various parts of Children's Services who will be joining the team throughout February. These are Jennie Hodgkiss, Rachael Foley, Sam Pryor and Sue Neil. They each bring a SEND background and a range of knowledge and experience from their previous roles.

SEND Organisational Structure



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6. SEND Panel update

The weekly SEND panel continues to meet every Tuesday and we now also have representation from a wide range of our partners. The first school SENCO representative has attended panel and has commented how valuable the experience was.

We would ask that professional who is interested in being part of panel (either to observe or as an ongoing member) to please contact Sue Powell susan.powell@dudley.gov.uk.

The terms of reference, including the criteria for decisions, is ready in Draft form. Once legal have confirmed it is in line with the code of practice it will be shared with all of our partners.

The panel team continue to strive towards bringing control to the process ensuring there is consistency and fairness in decisions being taken with the needs of the child at the centre of everything that we do.

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7. Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF)

There is a small amount of funding available to enhance support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Early Years settings. There are four levels of funding: *emerging or lower level needs*, which are administered through the Area SENCOs, and *higher or complex needs*, which are administered through the Specialist Early Years' Service.

The process for applying for the high level or complex needs funding has recently changed, therefore, we have taken the opportunity to update all of the guidance and paperwork.

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8. Stakeholder Survey – Tell us your views of the improvement programme and the SEND System?

We want to encourage as many people as possible who work with children and young people in Dudley and support the SEND system to take part in this short survey.

As part of communications plan we are conducting a survey for professionals so we can take a 'sense check' of where we are in terms of understanding stakeholders views of the current system and their understanding of the overall improvement programme.

Moving forward, we will use the feedback provided via this survey to inform our improvement programme and measure our progress against it as well as ensuring that we have the right communication mechanisms in place.

Please note - we will be surveying parents and carers separately in April to coincide with the 12 month anniversary of the previous parent carer survey.

[Take part in the stakeholder survey](#) closing date is 15 March 2020

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