



JUNE 2020

PROGRAMME UPDATE

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

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

Welcome to our latest SEND Improvement Programme bulletin. I'm conscious that it's been a while since we last communicated with you but a lot has happened, both in terms of the Coronavirus pandemic, our new normal and also with the delivery of the SEND improvement programme.

Over the last couple of months we have been working hard to understand what elements of our improvement programme can continue at the same pace and other areas that need to be reprioritised given our virtual arrangements and the difficulties we face through lockdown.

We have been working with schools throughout the crisis offering support and guidance and I am amazed at the resilience and sheer determination of our mainstream schools to remain open for our vulnerable and key worker children. In addition our special schools have also remained open and are supporting their children and young people's education at their very best of their ability. To schools across the borough I say a huge thank you.

I'd like to inform you that Neil Hoskinson, Head of Educations Outcomes and Inclusion has now left the local authority to take up a senior education post at another council. I would like to thank Neil for all of his contributions and wish him well in his new position.

We have appointed an interim Head of Educations Outcomes and Inclusion and will be recruiting to this position on a permanent basis as soon as possible.

To parents and carers I am grateful that you have been patient with us. I hope that this bulletin shows that things haven't stood still. There is no doubt that we have had some challenges that we have had to grapple with but we have been working hard to come up with

solutions through our determination to continue to improve our SEND offer in Dudley despite the pandemic.

We know that Coronavirus may feel daunting, especially for families and children. Everyone is having to spend more time at home to help slow the spread of the virus. Keeping up with school and working from home, exercising, limiting screen time, keeping occupied and motivated are all big challenges. To this end we have also produced a bespoke resource on our website www.dudley.gov.uk/coronavirusfamilies which provides details of support for those families who don't feel safe; or need some extra help coping. It's also got lots of ideas for us to stay as healthy and happy as possible during this challenging time.

2. SEND Team update

As part of our extensive SEND Improvement Programme, we are working with our partners to ensure that all processes are co-produced and shared so that all involved can work towards the same end goal.

One such process had started before the coronavirus outbreak and is continuing with the aim of producing specific plans to share with our partners so that a revised process can be in place for September 2020. Until that point, the current process and paper work remains in place.

The increased capacity of the SEND Team has been agreed and additional staff are now placed. Two Interim Annual Review Officers will focus on catching up with Annual Reviews that have taken place this year.

More information will be available shortly.

3. Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, including Annual Reviews guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to Covid-19

As the Government has made legislation changes to SEND, the DFE has issued guidance on temporary changes needed. This will strike the right balance during the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) between the needs of children and young people with SEND. This is

to ensure they are protected and receive the right support in a timely way, manage the demands on local authorities (LAs) and health bodies to respond to the outbreak.

The SEND (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 amend Regs that specify timescales that principally relate to EHC needs assessments and implementation of provisions where it is not reasonably practicable, or is impractical, to meet the time limit. This reason relates to the incidence transmission of coronavirus, the specific time limit will not apply, but process must be completed as soon as reasonably practicable. These regulations are kept under review on monthly basis and have been extended on the 29th May for a further month.

The key areas affected are the preparation and issue of EHC plans and Annual Reviews of EHC plans.

Each case needs to be determined based on its own circumstances - there is no blanket lifting of the timescale requirements.

Where there is a delay, due to reasons related to coronavirus, LAs and health bodies must complete the action as soon as is practicable.

Decisions, including those over the content of an EHC plan, must continue to be made in accordance with the statutory framework and be based on the individual needs, provision and outcomes for the child or young person.

It is still expected to do Annual Reviews and these can take place virtually where possible – schools are still technically required to undertake these. The Duty to cooperate has not changed. The Annual Review - will probably be briefer but is important to keep parents informed so that they feel valued and heard.

It is suggested that priority should be given to those with a transition for September (Year 1, Year 6 & Year 11).

Risk Assessments are to be completed by the school in conjunction with the LA with an emphasis on the impact of family factors in determining children and young people returning back to school if they are not in the shielding or vulnerable category list.

More information is available [here](#) on the government website

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

Following on from the submission and acceptance of our response to the 2019 Dudley SEND Local Area inspection, our interim progress was recently assessed by the Department for Education on 25th March 2020.

It stated that, 'Leaders understand the scale and pace expected of them to make the required progress in the priority areas identified in the WSOA. The SEND Oversight Group (SOG) is driving forward an ambitious improvement plan that goes beyond the WSOA and ensures that the 14 priority areas are visible. The SEND improvement strategy has clear governance in place along with programme management capacity and monitoring arrangements.

The SOG Intends to provide the overall strategic direction of the SEND improvement strategy and to:

- Oversee delivery of the SEND improvement plan complies with statutory, duties under the Education Act, Care Act, Children and Families Act and other relevant legislation.
- Ensure the delivery of an effective communication strategy with the SEND staff, Council, partners, parents, carers and young people.
- Oversee the integration of processes, policies, pathways, culture and performance with service delivery in a seamless fashion across the system.
- To drive and monitor the implementation of the OFSTED/CQC Action Plan and ensure the delivery of the SEND Improvement programme.
- To include the voice of the customer and our partners and to provide effective reporting and updates for Boards, Officers and Members as required to illustrate progress, risk management and the delivery of agreed objectives and outcomes.

The area reports that the following key milestones have been delivered:

- SEND Communications Strategy & Plan in place.
- SEND team structure revised and recruitment funded.
- Review of all SEND operational procedures and processes underway
- Agreed Parents/Carers improvement project participation.
- Transparent pathways and criterion to SEND provision.
- Additional CCG DCO post funded to support the DMO.

- Joint Commissioning Strategy development underway.
- SEND Outcomes Framework development underway.
- Preparation for Adulthood pathway development underway.
- EHCP task & finish improvement group launched.
- Revision of SEND Workforce Development Plan underway.
- Dudley EHCP database in place to provide robust MI and national, regional and statistical neighbour data.

Of the 131 specific actions in the WSOA, 31 are completed, 79 in progress and 21 yet to start and Dudley have established the foundations for a programme of SEND improvement and has engaged stakeholders. A number of actions have already been completed, or are in progress, and a constant focus on impact will be necessary going forward.'

Further interim reviews will take place in July and November 2020 and February 2021. We will provide updates on all of those interim inspections in further bulletins.

5. The role of SENCOs and improving our SEND offer

Key to delivering better outcomes for our children and young people with SEND is to ensure that our SENCOS across all settings are supported to deliver consistent and high quality support, that they are well informed, trained and play an active part in developing the SEND improvement programme.

To do this we know that the local authority has its part to play and together working with schools and parents we now need co-produce a package of support and guidance for our SENCOs so that they are able to make informed and consistent decisions on supporting their children.

At the Dudley Dialogue event held on 10th March 2020 schools told us it would be better in Dudley if:

- SEN is delivered by a whole school approach
- the SEN Offer is delivered by well trained and skilled teachers

In addition schools asked that the local authority:

- provide consistent guidance to schools and SENCOs about SEN Support
- provide Support Services that were more focused on supporting schools
- is aware of and identifies good practice and shares it across all schools

- ensures that parents know what good SEN Support looks like so they know what to expect from schools
- recognises that parents want a “plan” and that this can be delivered through an effective SEN Support Plan

Head Teachers also recognised that:

- there are inconsistencies in the SEN Support offer made by schools and settings
- there is a need to improve communication between the LA and schools
- there is a need to increase the knowledge and understanding of what works well in Dudley. There is evidence of good practice, but this should be identified and replicated.

Over the next few weeks we will be working with schools to develop a SENCo Network, building on the existing SENCo Forum, provided by Learning Support Service and making sure that our SENCos are fully participating members of our improvement programme.

SENCOs are already part of the Good EHCP Task and Finish Good Plan Group and we will be involving SENCOs in a number of improvement work streams that are outlined in our written statement of action.

We envisage that our new SENCo Network will provide formal routes for real dialogue and collaboration with SENCOs and parents, the local authority and health colleagues.

Key to our success is agreeing a consistent pathway across all settings; our SENCOs are undeniably one of our most important stakeholders. To this end we are delighted to have secured the support of Andrea Phelps-Brown, to develop our own SENCo network. Andrea has a wealth of SEND experience and has developed a successful SENCo network and bespoke online SENCo community of practice at Cheshire East Council. We look forward to working with her.

In the meantime if you would like to be involved in developing our SENCo support or would like more information please contact: Alicia Simpson and Louise Shackleton at lss.headofservice@dudley.gov.uk

6. The role of the Designated Medical and Designated Clinical Officers NHS Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group

Under the provisions of the Children and Families Act 2012, which was designed to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) must provide a Designated Medical Officer (DMO) or Designated Clinical Officer (DCO). In Dudley we have both a DMO and a DCO.

Dudley CCG has published an easy to understand [leaflet](#) to understand the differing roles and how they will support children and young people and work together to deliver the SEND improvement programme.

7. Consultation on the Dudley's Statement for Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS)

We are seeking views on our draft statement for Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) which set out how we will fulfil our duty to provide such provision for children and young people of compulsory school age who may not receive a suitable education due to illness, exclusion from school or for some other reason.

View our draft statement on our [website](#)

Deadline for responses is Friday 10 July.

Contacts:

- **Interim Director of Children's Services - Catherine Knowles** cath.knowles@dudley.gov.uk
- **Interim Assistant Director Children's Services - Helen Ellis** helen.ellis@dudley.gov.uk
- **Interim head of SEND – Toni Dawodu** toni.dawodu@dudley.gov.uk
- **SEND Manager - Sue Powell** – susan.powell@dudley.gov.uk
- **SEND Team Manager North- Rob Bennett** robert.x.bennett@dudley.gov.uk
- **SEND Team Manager South –Kelly Warne** kelly.warne@dudley.gov.uk
- **SEND Programme Manager – Simon Hickman** simon.hickman@dudley.gov.uk
- **SEND Programme Manager – Paul Klein** paul.klein@dudley.gov.uk

www.dudleyhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/sendimprovement