



JULY 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. We are continuing to develop our improvement programme. We have launched the SEND Vision and Improvement Road Map (Section 2) which clearly sets out what we need to do to improve our SEND offer.

Section 3 articulates our progress against the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) that we submitted to the Department for Education in December. Despite the pandemic we can demonstrate that there has been a huge amount of progress.

We have exciting news about our SEND network developments which will see an improved SENCo and stakeholder network offer (Section 4).

I would also ask if parents and carers could complete Working Together for Change's annual survey (Section 5). The findings of this survey are critical to ensuring that we are heading in the right direction with our improvement journey and will inform future improvements.

I am delighted to announce that we are one step closer to having a full complement of permanent staff in our SEND team (Section 6); and together with a programme of training and development of new policies there is no doubt that this will bring about consistency, efficacy and clarity to a system that was previously broken.

I also want to share with you a fantastic tool that our Educational Psychology Team have developed for schools in September. The 'Drawing the Ideal Safe School' is a structured drawing and talking tool for children and young people who are anxious about returning to school to use at home with their parents. (Section 7)

We are also seeking views on our draft Alternative Provision Policy (Section 8) which sets out how we will support children at risk of exclusion to receive the education they need.

Finally, our colleagues in the Dudley Disability Service are seeking views on the Dudley Autism Strategy and your experiences of services supporting autistic children and young people. (Section 9)

2. SEND Vision and Improvement Roadmap

The Dudley SEND improvement partnership have launched their roadmap for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The document sets out our how we are going to improve the Dudley area SEND offer to children and young people (up to age 25) and their families.

The partnership has worked with parents, carers and partners to clearly articulate what as a system we are doing to improve our processes, support and ultimately better outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The roadmap clearly articulates a single vision and how we will make a difference, what we have already achieved and what we need to do moving forward.

We know that there is a lot to do!

In July 2019 OfSTED and the Care Quality Commission published their findings of their joint area SEND inspection of services and provision and concluded that as a system there were some significant weakness. They determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) or action plan was required. This was submitted to OfSTED in November and approved on 20 December 2019.

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic 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, but rest assured we will be using our best endeavours to meet all delivery deadlines.

We know that every child or young person deserves the very best and that there are increased demands on the SEND system and that resources are tight, but we also

acknowledge that we do not yet deliver this on a consistent basis in Dudley.

Our commitment

The Dudley Local Area SEND partnership, made up of the council, Dudley CCG, Dudley Parent Carer Forum – Working Together for Change, NHS, health providers, schools, colleges, employers, parents & carers and children and young people are now working together to deliver positive outcomes and improved lives.

View the [SEND Vision and Improvement Roadmap](#).

3. Update on Written Statement of Action (WSOA)

Following on from the OfSTED/CQC joint inspection in May 2019 work continues at pace to deliver our commitments set down in the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) that was accepted by OfSTED in December 2019. The WSOA details our commitment to resolving the fourteen identified areas of weakness and in addition sets aspiration for delivering a SEND Improvement Programme that involves all partners and stakeholders.

An interim review on our progress was conducted by the DfE at the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) meeting on 25 March. We have received their report on our progress against the commitments we made in our WSOA submission. It reported that at the time, of 131 specific actions in the WSOA, 31 were completed, 79 in progress and 21 yet to start. In summary, the report 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 as we move forward with the programme of improvement. This will ensure delivery of the SEND improvement plan complies with statutory duties under the Education Act, Care Act, Children and Families Act and complies with all relevant legislation.



**It also
the following**



**confirmed that
key milestones**



have been met:

- SEND Communications Strategy & Plan in place
- SEND team structure revised and recruitment fully costed and funded
- Review of all SEND operational procedures and processes underway
- Agreed Parents/Carers improvement project around participation
- Transparent pathways and criterion for SEND provision
- Additional Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) post funded
- Joint Commissioning Strategy in development
- SEND Outcomes Framework in development
- Preparation for Adulthood pathway in development
- EHCP task & finish improvement group launched
- Revision of SEND Workforce Development Plan underway
- Dudley Synergy SEND database in place to provide robust Management Information

The report also states that:

Dudley has established strong foundations for a programme of SEND improvement that has engaged stakeholders. A number of actions have already been completed, or are in progress, and their needs to be a constant focus on impact moving forward to prove and evidence the positive trajectory of improvement.

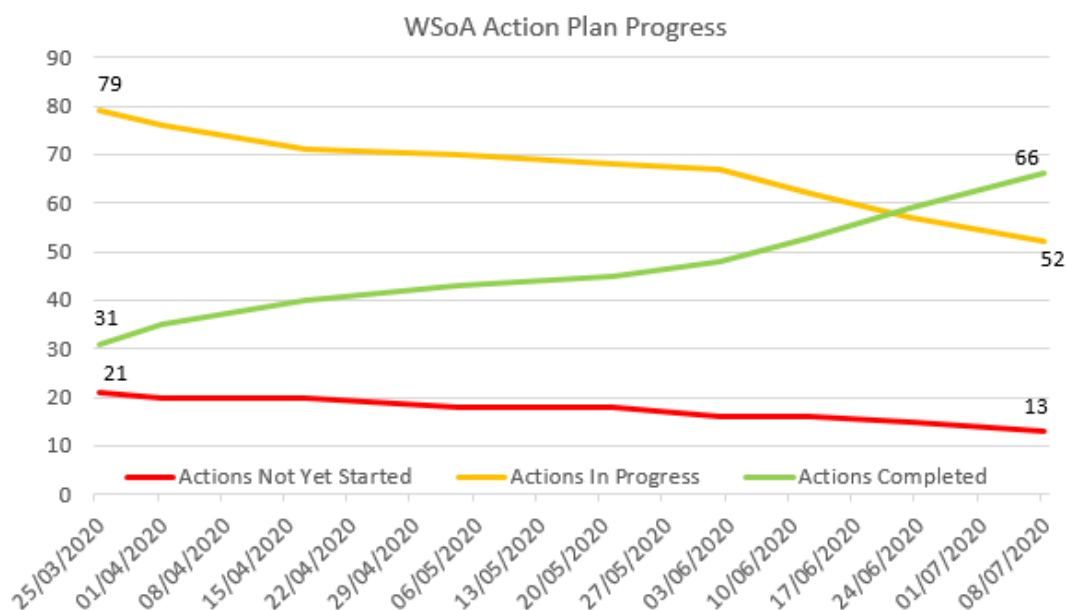
As a footnote to the review output, the Covid-19 Pandemic has inevitably impacted the capacity of resources across the Dudley SEND System to deliver some of the actions and outputs in the WSoA.

To mitigate this, a review was completed with all partners to review and re-prioritise where necessary the delivery dates for actions. The fourteen remedial areas have been prioritised based on an objective criteria and a revised plan of delivery has been produced. This is not in any way diminishing the importance of all actions in the WSoA but ensuring that momentum and delivery are maintained despite any setbacks in relation to the current situation.

Since the review progress has continued to be made in the delivery of our WSoA commitments,

the current

progress is shown in the graph below and illustrates the increase in actions completed since the review of 25 March 2020:



Further interim DfE reviews will take place in July 2020, November 2020 and February 2021.

4. SEND Network update

The SEND Improvement Programme has been refocussing on the function of the SENCo network by co-producing a new approach to improve communication between the LA and schools. This will increase the knowledge and understanding of what works well in Dudley and to identify and replicate good practice in Dudley which produces good outcomes for our young people with SEND needs.

The SEND Team has been working with the Learning Support Service, Education Outcomes, an experienced Education Consultant, and parent/carers via Dudley Dialogue to create an Action Plan and launch the newly named SEND Network to replace the SENCo Forum with an emphasis on multi-partnership attendance. This will ensure a co-ordinated SEND information Network to ensure that all partners receive the same message and comprise of a core CPD offer.

The new SEND Network offer comprises of **5 SEND Network meetings** each year, running from 1:30pm to 4:00pm, **4 SENCo Cluster Meeting Groups** 3 times a year, organised geographically and hosted by schools on a rota basis within the clusters and **1 Annual SEND**

Day Conference. These meeting will be virtual initially.

These meetings and the Conference will:

- deliver a shared and published SEND Network Training Programme
- offer CPD opportunities
- provide a chance to shape the future of SEND in Dudley
- create an improved working relationship with the LA, the SEND Team and the Support Services
- enable a high quality of co-production and partnership working
- use the skills, experiences and vision of those involved to create a new chapter for SEND in Dudley

This offer will be informed by the Virtual Cluster Meetings currently being led by LSS to share the proposed new format and ascertain training needs and wants for SEND.

The new SEND Network offer also includes access to a SEND virtual **Support Portal** from September for SENCos and School Leaders, the option for additional staff to attend all events and the opportunity for school representation to create the Dudley SEND Toolkit, focusing on the Graduated Response for First Concerns, SEN Support, support for Needs Assessment requests and the Annual Review process.

The cost to settings for this offer is £75 for a school year for the package of all 5 SEND Network sessions and 3 SENCo cluster meetings and the SEND Day Conference.

The Team involved in the new SEND Network would like to schedule a presentation at Primary and Secondary Heads Forum in September led by Helen Ellis.

Please feel free to contact Karen Connerney with any further questions/queries:

Karen.Connerney@Dudley.gov.uk.

5. Parent Carer Forum survey

Working Together for Change, Dudley's Parent Carer Forum, is running their annual survey to find out how the SEND system is working in Dudley and what your personal experiences are. Now is your time to provide your thoughts, share your experiences and have your say!

Please [complete the survey](#) to highlight your views.

The findings will be used to inform the Dudley SEND improvement programme.



6. SEND Team update

We are pleased to announce that six further permanent Case Officer roles have been appointed during June. We are hopeful they will start with the team during the autumn term.

We are also about to advertise for the remaining Senior Case Officer position. We hope once these positions are filled, we will have a fully staffed permanent team in place.

7. Drawing the Ideal Safe School Tool

Since UK schools closed to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, one big question has dominated educational conversations: *How are we going to support all these young people back to school?*

Research has shown that the combination of drawing and talking together with a child is a **powerful** way to find out their perspective. Recent guidance from the British Psychological Society suggests that activities such as drawing the ideal safe school can increase feelings of being involved and reduce anxiety.

The 'Drawing the Ideal Safe School' is a structured drawing and talking tool for children and young people who are anxious about returning to school to use at home with their parents.

Using the **Drawing the Ideal Safe School** tool can be a useful way to talk about enjoying school and increase young people's confidence that they will be safe and well there.

You can [read a blog](#) about the toolkit to understand more.

8. Dudley's Alternative Provision Strategic Policy

Dudley's Alternative Provision Strategic Policy will look at the ways the authority can commission, provide access to and review its approach to alternative provision.

The draft plan aims to help those children and young people who are at risk of exclusion to access the education that is appropriate to their needs, in a timely and well-planned way, avoiding permanent exclusion wherever possible.

This could range from strategies in the classroom, to behaviour management support, to multi-agency support and intervention, through to placements at specialist settings best suited to the needs of each individual child.

Teachers and the public can share their views on the draft policy to help inform decision for the future. The policy can be viewed on the [council website](#).

Please note, the closing date for comments is 11 September 2020.

9. Dudley Autism Strategy survey

We're keen to hear your views on the [Dudley Autism Strategy](#) and your experiences of autism to help inform our priorities and future planning.

Please [participate in the survey](#) to highlight your views.

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www.dudleyhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/sendimprovement