

Dear Headteacher/SENCO

I hope you all had the well-earned rest over the Easter holiday after the incredible work you have all done in the most challenging of times. There is much to report from SEND, and I hope that you will find the extended information in this newsletter helpful.

First, I wanted to provide an update on some important areas of focus for us as we move into the final term of the school year.

- You should all be invited to your **multi-agency meeting** for your school during April or May 2021. The purpose of these meetings is to have dedicated time with your SEND locality team to discuss children in your setting and the ways we can collectively support in meeting their needs.

There will be an opportunity to discuss pupils who may be at the start of the graduated approach alongside those who have more complex needs who require a multi-agency approach.

- This term we will be particularly focusing on identifying those pupils with an **EHCP in Y5, Y10 and Y1 in Infant schools** who require transition annual reviews in the summer term in order to confirm which local authority representatives will attend. Given many of the difficulties experienced this year around transition we really need to get this right going forward and have dedicated officer time both across our specialised services, including the SEN administrative team – your support will be crucial.
- This term has seen some real challenges with **the finalisation of the consultation period for the re-design for the SEN administration team**. Work began over 3 years ago following the recommendations in the Written Statement of Action in 2018. More recently, we have been able to effectively move forward, working closely with the unions and the SENAR team to co-produce ‘a fit for purpose’ service that will ensure EHCPs for families with complex needs are effectively and efficiently issued and reviewed.

The timeline for the implementation of the new structure and more than 20 additional permanent jobs is expected to finally be completed by the end of August 2021 - so we are not out of the woods just yet. This will close down the significant reliance the service has placed on interims during the embargo on the recruitment of permanent posts – which has had significant implications on the improvement in both performance as well as the much-needed stability.

- Significant structural work has taken place to **improve the administration of assessments**, including the quality and timeliness, as well as the way the service reviews children with the most complex SEND needs. The allocation of the **link advisory teacher** and where appropriate, the link EP for all new requests for support, either through a SEND support plan or an assessment, is beginning to provide the much-needed continuity for schools and families. There is already some improvement in the backlog of assessments which has reduced from over 500 out of time assessments to 97. Our mediations and tribunals are now decreasing too.

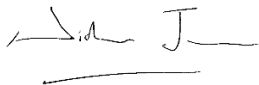
- The introduction of a **new system for ensuring the quality of assessments**, including feedback from our families and team managers as well as a team of multi-agency professionals, regularly carrying out dip-sampling, is in place. Whilst there is some evidence of this improvement, we want to ensure that there is sufficient evidence of the journey of the family captured and that the new measures are having an impact.
- We know there are issues with the **statutory review processes for EHCPs** not being effectively administered for some time and the backlog for updating plans. Thank you to the head teachers who have offered to provide input to the developments we are seeking to make in this area. Working with you and across the relevant agencies and with families and children and young people we are looking to **co-design the current templates to ensure they are child friendly and person centred**. We are also looking to **re-visit the roll out of person-centred training**, listening to feedback from our special school headteachers. We want to do this with all schools in the city in the autumn term alongside the launch of the co-produced Birmingham person centred plans.
- The **implementation of individual mainstream and special school meetings**, now in its fourth termly cycle, is supporting a more effective way of discussing children and young people where they are struggling with their mainstream placement. Team leaders of the professionals who are part of these meetings are also part of the newly introduced provision teams which provide the oversight for specialist provision for special school, resource base and independent school placements as well as personal budgets, enhanced funding, post 16 and early years provision. This new way of working means that the allocation and monitoring of specialist resources will ensure the right provision is in the right place at the right time and is effective in meeting need. Case workers will be closely assigned and working alongside provision team leaders.
- In the summer we will be sharing the **upgrade to Impulse**, the case management system for EHCPs, which it is expected will significantly support the improvement in the workflow management, reporting and communication for families and professionals. Portals will become available for professionals and parents to access directly and document storage will ensure all information relating to a child or young person with SEND are easily accessible.
- This term will have its challenges as the service prepares for its **reinspection by OFSTED** for the 12 Written Statements of Action it was given in 2018. This will be a real challenge for the local authority as little progress had been made between March 2018 and 2019. The deep-rooted systemic failures within Birmingham and the fact that we had the highest number of written actions in England is a real challenge for us as a city.
- We have been working closely with the DfE who have monitored our progress with the improvement programme we put in place in the autumn of 2019 alongside addressing the specific WSOA. We can already see that the early help and development of localities is supporting the much-needed change.

- The **SENAR restructure** has been challenging and has taken longer than anticipated. Our sufficiency work and the review we have undertaken to understand our resources and get a handle on how we distribute these has been a particular challenge, but we are now finally embedding the new processes.

I cannot thank head teachers enough for the support and patience you have given during one of the most challenging improvement programmes I have had to deliver and within the backdrop of a loss of leadership support both at Chief Executive Level and directorate level. I do want to assure you, that whilst we know we will be able to share with our regulators some of the much-needed improvements, we are mindful of the journey ahead to embed the improvements moving forward.

Since my time in Birmingham I have seen over and over again the potential for being 'great' and indeed the very good practice in existence from school leadership teams across the city for our most vulnerable learners and I am looking forward to seeing this unfold in the years ahead.

Nichola Jones



Assistant Director Inclusion and SEND
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SEND Locality Network Briefings, SENCO Local Consortia Groups and Webinars

Spring Term

Our sixteen consortia groups led by local SENCOs and supported by the SEND Locality teams continued to meet over the Spring term. CPD on a variety of different topics was accessed including Mental Health, Sensory Diets (OT), OT and Autism, Stammering (SLT), ADHD, Language Delay, SEMH, Developmental Language Delay (SLT), Provision Mapping,

Sensory Classroom (OT) as well as providing an opportunity to share good practice over lock down.

During the week beginning the 22nd February 2021 we held our six locality briefings at which city wide SEND messages and information was shared from both health and education they included updates from school nursing, the developing local provision projects and SEND processes.

Monthly webinars this term began with Tom Cross a leading junior in the Bar in the field of education law. He outlined the main duties on schools to avoid disability discrimination and provided real life worked examples to support schools in becoming compliant with equality legislation. Professor Amanda Kirby returned in February with her webinar on improving communication with families where she was able to provide her personnel and professional insight into this important area. For the final webinar of the term we returned to Tom Cross for a presentation on mainstream inclusion. In his presentation he clarified what the SEND legislation means when it states that there is a “right to inclusion” in mainstream for children with SEN.

All professional webinars are available to view on the local offer:-

<https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/professionals-and-education-settings/locality-information-events-and-consultations/webinars/>

Summer Term

Our online offer of support for schools and families is continuing this term. Network briefings across the six locality areas will be taking place during the week beginning the 14th June. These provide an opportunity to share key developments in SEND across the city. Alongside these our monthly CPD webinars are continuing this term starts with Amanda Kirby on 19th April – “Preparing for Transition” and continues with Mel Ainscow on the 10th May 2021 – “Inclusion and Equity”. All these events are bookable through Eventbrite and will be delivered virtually through Microsoft TEAMS. We would encourage SENCOS to also get involved with their SENCO Local Consortia groups. These groups meet half termly, they are organised by SENCO Local Leaders and agenda items are designed to respond to the needs of the local area. There is regular attendance at these meetings by occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and other SEND support services delivering CPD and providing advice and support. Finally, our monthly programme of parent webinars is continuing with the first being delivered by occupational therapy. Please see below for further details about all these events.

Placements – September 2022

Mainstream Schools

All pupils with an EHCP in Year 5, Year 10 or Y1 in infant schools should have an annual review or local school discussion during the Summer term which is attended by a member of the local authority SEND team.

As part of this review meeting the appropriate placement for September 2022 should be discussed and parents’ preferences for placement should be recorded.

If the review recommends changes to the EHCP these should be recorded in the EHCP review form and evidence for the changes provided.

As part of the review process the local authority provision teams will look at the recommendations from the review meeting and make decisions regarding any amendments to provision, funding and/or placement type.

Local Offer Website

The new Birmingham Local Offer website is now launched. It includes information about the wide range of services that are available to support all areas of a child's life (0-25 years) especially those with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). This includes support with education, physical and mental health, social care, leisure activities and moving towards independence and adulthood.

This Local Offer website gives information about the support that the local authority expects to be available across education, health and social care. The information on the website is clear and easy to find. It says who a particular service is for, how to apply, and how decisions are made about who gets that service.

The information you should be able to find on a Local Offer Website includes:

- Sources of support, advice and information for children, young people and families including support groups and forums.
- Special educational, health and social care provision for children and young people with SEN or disabilities
- Arrangements to identify and assess children and young people with SEN, including how an assessment can be requested.
- Other educational provision, for example leisure activities, sports or arts provision,
- Information about provision to assist in preparing children and young people for adulthood including post-16 education and training provision
- Arrangements for travel to and from schools, post-16 institutions and early years' providers
- Childcare, including suitable provision for disabled children and those with SEND
- Support available to young people in higher education, particularly the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and the process and timescales for making an application for DSA
- Arrangements for resolving disagreements and for mediation, and details about making complaints

In Birmingham, we have been updating our Local Offer website to make the information in it clearer and easier to find.

Every school and setting has a duty to link to the Local Offer Website and so we are now asking that you update the link on your website, along with any other associated

documentation, to our new site address www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk. This will need to be done as soon as possible.

In addition, we really want to keep adding to the information on the Local Offer Website in order to make it the one stop shop for young people and their families. To do this we need the views of children, young people, families, schools and settings. We are therefore asking you to promote this new site to parents using the materials provided and also to share with staff within your school or setting and provide feedback using the feedback form on the site.

Covid-19 – Return to school

Following the return to school on March 8th, attendance of children and young people with SEND in Birmingham schools has continued to rise.

SEND Inclusion Services make one ‘face to face’ visit per day, in line with current approved Risk Assessments, in addition to a full offer of support to children, families and schools which is delivered virtually.

The LA Send Links have continued to contact schools about those children who have EHCPs and are not yet back in school, in order to offer support. There continues to be close liaison with Social Care colleagues to ensure that children with SEND, identified as vulnerable, receive timely support.

The DfE receives a weekly summary of data and narrative about the attendance of children and young people with EHCPs.

Parent & School Link Service – contacts have significantly increased over the past months, feedback is positive, scoring a 4 on average out of 5.

‘got back within 24hours’ ‘extremely efficient’ ‘good service’

Parent Link Officers work alongside all agencies to seek a resolution, improving the outcomes for the child/young person. The team consists of one team coordinator, and 5 Parent Link Officers. The service will be recruiting a 6th member of the team this month so that the service will work in line with the new Locality model and each locality will have a designated Parent Link Officer.

Summer Term – Events

Locality Termly Network Briefings - Schools

Locality network briefings provide an opportunity for city-wide updates around SEND from Education and Health, developing collaborative working across the locality and specialised services.

Summer Term 2021

Central – 14th June 1.00 pm
North West - 15th June 1.00 pm
North - 16th June 9.30 am
East - 16th June 1.00 pm
South - 17th June 1.00 pm
South West - 18th June – 9.30 am

Online Consultation with OT and SALT - Schools

<p>A 30 min consultation with an Occupational Therapist or a Speech and Language Therapist can be booked online by SENCOs (other school staff may attend). During the consultation, strategic and/or case work advice can be provided.</p>	<p>Summer Term 2021 19th June – 23rd July 2020 Bookable</p>
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Locality Half Termly Network Meetings Resource Base

<p>Network meetings for senior staff in resource bases provide an opportunity to develop collaborative working across schools and specialised services. These meetings will alternate between locality meetings and SEND designation meetings.</p>	<p>Summer Term 2 South and South West - 06.07.2021 - TBC North and North West - 08.07.2021 - TBC East and Central - 13.07.2021 - TBC</p>
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5. Monthly Webinars

An opportunity to hear from SEND experts

Date	Theme	Key Speaker
19 th April 2021	Preparing for Transition	Professor Amanda Kirby
10 th May 2021	The big challenge for the English education system: inclusion and equity	Mel Ainscow

Local Consortia Half Termly Meetings - Schools

Summer Term 1

Sparkhill - TBC
 Cole Heath – 10.05.2021 – 1.00 pm – OT – Classroom Equipment for Handwriting, Sensory, Motor and Self Care
 Eastwards – 25.05.2021 – 2.00 pm - Dyslexia
 FAYES – 04.05.2021 – 1.30 pm
 Saltley Plus – TBC
 Erdington – 19.05.2021 – 1.30 pm – SLT – Developmental Language Disorder
 Perry Barr – TBC
 Sutton Coldfield - TBC
 Aston Nechells – 20.05.2021 – 1.30 pm
 Handsworth – 26.05.2020 – pm – SLT tbc
 Ladywood – 19.05.2021 – 1.30 pm
 Hall Green – 17.05.2021 – 1.00 pm
 Kings Norton – 25.05.2021 – 1.30 pm
 Northfield – 10.05 2021 – 1.30 pm – OT Sensory Vs Anxiety
 Quinborne – TBC
 Senneleys – 19.05.2021 2021 – 1.30 pm

Summer Term 2

Sparkhill - TBC
 Cole Heath – 14.06.2021 – 1.00 pm – SLT – Listening Skills
 Eastwards – 08.07.2021 – 2.00 pm
 FAYES – TBC
 Saltley Plus – TBC
 Erdington – 30.06.2021 – 1.30 pm SLT – Speech Sound Disorders
 Perry Barr – TBC
 Sutton Coldfield - TBC
 Aston Nechells – 01.07.2021 – 1.30 pm
 Handsworth – 30.06.2020 – All day – Reflective audit and action plan

Ladywood – 07.07.2021 – 1.30 pm
Hall Green – 30.06.2021 – 1.00 pm
Kings Norton – 29.06.2021 – 1.30 pm
Northfield – 14th June 2021 – 1.30 pm
Quinborne – TBC
Senneleys – 30.06.2021 2021 – 1.30 pm

Inclusion Programme interim report highlights – April 2021

1. Building the SEND early help local team and offer around mainstream schools

The recruitment of six OTs and SALTs for each area of city (2020) is being extended to provide for one SALT and OT within each of the sixteen consortia.

The appointment of a training nurse post to support mainstream and special schools in the training and development of staff to support children with medical needs will be in place for the summer term 2021.

388 individual school meetings have taken place across most mainstream schools in January and February 2021 with a focus on returning to school after lockdown and transition. Feedback from 153 schools rated the experience as excellent (125), very good (27).

New online, virtual professional development was rolled out in the autumn and spring terms, with a series of 7 webinars led by Professor Amanda Kirby and Barrister Tom Cross, to promote inclusive approaches across the city.

A more individual approach for consortia and schools' development will include consultation led approaches for professional development through an on-line therapy, teacher-led bookings system and supporting classroom-based approaches.

Specific focus is also being placed on the professional development of settings supporting children on the autistic spectrum by a national expert who will develop and roll out a £1m transformation programme for the city.

The appointment by the council of an ASD champion will support the much-needed development both in schools and a service redesign to ensure that wider reform now takes place, integrating health and social care services together, for this group of children and young people.

The inclusion leadership team is being developed and of the 8 heads of service, there are 2 really experienced service design leaders for the virtual school and home to school transport. There are currently 4 heads of service at the final stages of the recruitment process. These key appointments will be crucial in the delivery of the improvement programme.

2. SEND Youth Forum

The 12 young people (aged 12-18 years) currently meet on a monthly basis via Microsoft teams with sessions focusing on promoting the pupil voice in particular in relation to:

- Attitudes towards home learning, returning to school post lockdown
- SEND strategy
- Co -design events with the NHS, adult services, Cambridge University, NSPCC and developing a web page on the local offer website.
- Raising awareness of additional needs and how best to support CYP with additional needs.
- Issues which are meaningful to them

The group is currently planning a campaign #additionalnotspecial for May 2021, looking at the negative impact of using the 'SEND' terminology which the young people find outdated and not representative of them.

The training package will consist of, a quiz, a booklet, a 4-part 15 minute filmed podcast with debates on:

1. What's working well in schools
2. What's not working well in schools
3. Why we don't like the term SEND
4. A message to my teacher

The SEND Youth Forum has developed a web page on the local offer website outlining what the forums role and aims are:

<https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/children-and-young-people/>

3. Developing SEND Local Provision

The Developing Local Provision (DLP) Project is funding to support mainstream schools to enhance and improve their knowledge, skills and provision in meeting the needs of more pupils with complex/significant SEND through quality first teaching and SEND support. These are the areas that both the DfE and Ofsted have highlighted as needing improvement following the SEND reforms in 2014.

The DLP projects aligns exactly with the "group of schools model" proposed by DfE in their presentation to the region in February 2021 as the way forward to building capacity in mainstream schools.

The DLP has been funded from the High Needs Block and is focussed on Birmingham's strategic priorities which are:

- to reduce reliance on high cost specialist placements in out of City schools;
- enable pupils to access high quality provision as close as possible to where they live;
- enhance the capacity of mainstream schools and settings to work together to provide for pupils in their local area

- to ensure the needs of pupils are identified and met without the need for an EHCP where this is appropriate.

The initiative is not designed to stop or hinder pupils who need an EHCP.

The project is based on the principles of collaborative and innovative school led partnership working in their localities. The teams look to identify, plan and develop proposals for SEND improvement projects which are targeted at their identified local needs based on an analysis of a range of local contextual, financial and performance data.

Schools have been encouraged to use evidence-based research approaches and project proposals which include how the views of parents, carers, children and young people will be used alongside their local key performance indicators to demonstrate the impact of their projects

Funding is also being used to support system change to help secure places for children and young people who are currently awaiting placements or who are at risk of placement breakdown, especially the 'rising 5' year olds and secondary pupils who are not in schools, not on a school roll or who are non-attenders. Another funding stream is funding projects for early years and nurseries and for Post 16 providers.

Special schools are key partners and resources for mainstream schools to draw upon and work with collaboratively in this project. Outreach models are being set up for special schools to support the development of SEND provision in mainstream schools across the city.

The project has a robust governance and reporting structure which reports to a central reference group made up of headteachers and LA SEND senior officers. Projects have defined measurable key performance indicators based on improving pupil outcomes.

The impact of COVID 19 had a significant impact on the start-up of this project, however, all schools in networks and consortia across Birmingham City Council are now engaged and twenty projects have been approved by a multi-agency panel including headteachers and will be starting at the beginning of the summer term April 2021 . The final eight projects will be finalised for roll out from 1st May 2021

The project has been agreed by school's forum to run for two years with a guaranteed carry forward of unspent funding in April 2021 due to delay created by the impact of COVID-19 .

4. Developing responsive, flexible and effective local specialist provision

Discussions with all special school head teachers have taken place to consider the potential for localised provision to match local needs, where this is possible.

A sufficiency report has been developed, mapping the pattern of specialised provision based on previous and current provision, as well as projected need and options for developing specialist provision where there is capacity to do so.

During the summer and autumn term, a series of discussions, focusing on children and young people across a range of needs including those with:

- profound and multiple, severe learning difficulties;
- moderate learning difficulties;
- autistic spectrum disorder;
- social, emotional and mental health needs;
- sensory needs

will contribute to the co-design of tiered provision to meet the majority of needs in the local community.