


Report to:	EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD
Date:	17 October 2023
Reporting Officer:	Jane Sowerby, Assistant Director for Education
Subject:	SEND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION UPDATE
Report Summary:	This report provides the regular update to the Education Attainment Improvement Board on progress in implementing Tameside's Written Statement of Action (WSOA).
Recommendations:	Members are asked to note the summary of progress against the Written Statement of Action provided in the appendices to this report.
Corporate Plan:	The recommendations support the Council's SEND Strategy and starting well priority. Furthermore, they will ensure the Council is better able to meet its statutory obligations.
Policy Implications:	Early identification of high-quality support for children and young people with special education needs and / or disabilities is a vital part of our living well and starting well objectives.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	<p>The report provides an update on progress against the Written Statement of Actions (WSOA). There are no direct financial implications arising from this update report with any spend referred to in this report, being subject to separate governance process for approval.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that there is a significant and increasing deficit on the High Needs block, as reported to Schools Forum, which is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Implementing the WSOA is vital to improving practices and to support managing the deficit on the DSG.</p>
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report save that the deficit requires continued robust management.
Risk Management:	<p>Failure to meet statutory obligations in relation to SEND could result in poor outcomes for children and young people and significantly increase the risk of poor inspection outcomes for the Borough.</p> <p>The drafting of the Written Statement of Action was overseen by the SEND Improvement Group. This group, reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board.</p> <p>The SEND Improvement Group has been reset as the SEND Inclusion and Partnership Group and will continue to provide oversight of the delivery of this plan as well as a wider view of improvement and provision. In addition, formal oversight is provided by the Education Attainment and Improvement Board (EAIB).</p>
Access to Information:	This report does not contain information, which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or members of the public.

Background Information: The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Between 18 and 22 October 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Tameside to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.
- 1.2 We received the findings report on 11 January 2022. The outcome of the inspection was that a [Written Statement of Action](#) (WSOA) was required because of 10 significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. Our WSOA was signed off by Ofsted on 1 July 2022.
- 1.3 Progress in implementing the WSOA is overseen by the SEND Improvement Group, which has been reset as the SEND Inclusion and Partnership Board chaired by the Assistant Director for Education, with updates provided to this Board. Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England's SEND Advisors meet monthly with Council and Health Officers to monitor progress and agree priority actions. So far, five formal monitoring meetings have been held (September and December 2022; March, June and September 2023).

2. UPDATE ON THE WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION PROGRESS

- 2.1 To provide an update on progress, three documents are attached as appendices to this report:
- **Appendix 1** The report compiled for DfE and NHS England Advisors at our September 2023 monitoring meeting, this report provides a detailed overview of progress.
 - **Appendix 2** The presentation, which was given to DfE and NHS England Advisors at our September 2023 monitoring meeting.
 - **Appendix 3** The Written Statement of Action Highlights Tracker, which was given to DfE and NHS England Advisors at our September 2023 monitoring meeting.
- 2.2 Since our last update to the EAIB the following actions have been completed:

Communication -

- The new Local Offer website is confirmed for launch in December 2023.
- A new SEND system newsletter was published in July 2023 and is scheduled to be published quarterly.

Capacity and resource in the right areas -

- SEND Assessment Team restructure has now been completed with some external recruitment ongoing.
- New leaders are now in post shoring up leadership oversight and direction for SEND improvement. These posts are: Head of SEND; Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO); SEND Programme Lead.
- Health Navigator Service has supported 664 new families since July 2022.

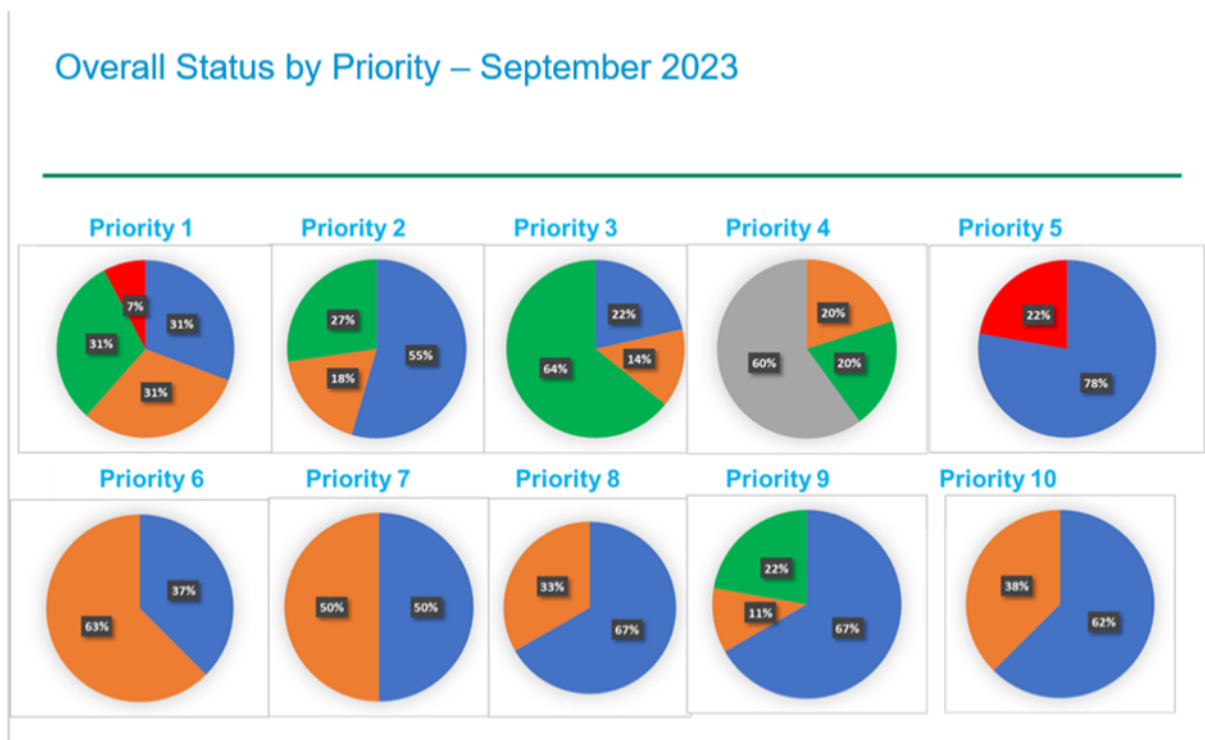
Increasing inclusion to meet need as early as possible -

- A significant amount of diagnostic and planning work has been undertaken as part of Delivering Better Value, including analysing data from across the system, a diagnostic of root causes of pressures, focus on ideal outcomes and a plan to change our approach in inclusion and transitions has been completed and a £1 million bid from the Council has been agreed by the DfE (report to Board due October 2023).
- Schools training attended: 'Impactful Leadership in SEND' June and July 2023; Starling training for Autism Awareness; we have secured financial support from the DfE's Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence (RISE) programme.

Improved focus and self-evaluation –

- DfE reporting processes have been reset and agreed with DfE to focus on impact.
- New modelling has started for CAMHS initial assessments for core and neuro-developmental needs with a view to enhancing the number of assessments the pathway.
- A new BRAG rating has been developed to give a more pragmatic and accurate view of progression.

2.3 WSOA actions are progressing with 46% of actions completed, a further 46% of actions on track (green or amber) and 3% of actions are red, which reflects a reset of the BRAG to focus on impact and the wider picture. We are aware that the existing WSOA with the best intention does not have the narrative and focus that portrays this. Reports need to present a better understanding of where we are, what needs to be done and reflect positive impact and purpose where it exists.



2.4 In Priority 1, the endemic weaknesses in the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, action 1.3.1 is BRAG rated as red due to delays in fully incorporating student voice. This action has been hampered by change in key personnel. This will be a priority to bring capacity to this area to get it on track. The voice of the SEND Youth Council is now included in the monitoring board to support greater emphasis on pupil voice.

2.5 The remaining two BRAG rated actions are in Priority 5, unreasonable waiting times, which lead to increased needs for children and young people and their families. 51.4 and 5.1.5 relate to the CAMHS core and neuro-developmental pathways and the wait times. Education, Health and Care are working together to resolve issues and direct support to families on the waiting lists where they remain high. Wait time issues have been escalated and a multi-agency meeting took place on 25 September but this issue remains a concern. Priority 5 has been subject to deep dives in monthly DfE meetings and will be a spotlight area for the next DfE meeting and at the SEND improvement board both on 19 October.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 In order to bring pace to the landscape and to ensure preparedness for the next inspection, a diagnostic review of SEND has been commissioned and SEND Consultant, Jackie Ross, is undertaking this work currently. This diagnostic review will support the Council to complete an accurate self-evaluation and better prepare for the next SEND Area Inspection under the new framework. The recommendations of this report will be brought to the next Education Attainment and Improvement Board.
- 3.2 Practice and resource need to be focused on getting the basics right for children and adopting the Children's Services, 'Brilliant at the Basics' principles. Ensuring significantly improved performance around multi-agency attendance at annual reviews and completing reviews in full, is a key priority to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.3 The drafting of the Written Statement of Action was overseen by the SEND Improvement Group. This group, reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The SEND Improvement Group has been reset as the SEND Inclusion and Partnership Board and will continue to provide oversight of the delivery of this plan as well as providing a wider view of improvement and provision. In addition, formal oversight is provided by the Education Attainment and Improvement Board.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Progress in delivering the WSOA although initially slow, is gathering pace. Barriers to progression are being removed with the recruitment to key roles. A number of actions have already been completed but will be monitored to ensure that change and transformation needs are identified and actioned and that the actions remain valid and dynamic. Some actions have been revisited where further assurance has been required and recovery plans put in place, such as around annual reviews and health waiting times.
- 4.2 A diagnostic review of SEND is being undertaken to ensure progress is being made at pace and to ensure readiness for our next area inspection.
- 4.3 The SEND improvement board (SEND Inclusion and Partnership Board) and EAIB will focus on rapid improvement of outcomes and experiences for children and their families.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 As set out at the front of the report.