

Report to:	EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD
Date:	12 March 2024
Reporting Officer:	Deborah Myers, Assistant Director for Education
Subject:	SEND & WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION (WSOA) UPDATE
Report Summary:	This report provides an update to the Education Attainment Improvement Board on the Local Area's progress in addressing Tameside's areas of identified weakness, as in the Ofsted inspection in 2021. The report explains the most recent reset to ensure that progress is visible and delivered at pace through a single prioritised Local Area Partnership SEND & AP Improvement Plan with strengthened governance.
Recommendations:	That the Board note and reviews the improvement journey through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the regular summary of progress. 2. support and challenge of the refreshed integrated SEND & AP Improvement and Delivery Plans and Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) which encompasses the WSOA.
Corporate Plan:	The recommendations support the Council's SEND Strategy and starting well priority, ensuring the Council can meet its statutory duties.
Policy Implications:	There are no policy implications in this report.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	The report provides an update on the Local Area's Improvement journey against the Written Statement of Actions (WSOA) and refreshed Improvement and delivery plans. 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. 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 required improvements is vital to improving practice and to supporting the deficit management plan.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	There are no legal issues arising from the report. The report describes the Improvement Plan to address weaknesses identified by Ofsted in 2021 and which demonstrates that the Council is addressing the issues raised and to ensure compliance with its statutory obligations.
Risk Management:	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 local area. To mitigate this risk, a refreshed improvement approach has been developed to strengthen oversight and delivery. The SEND Improvement Group was reset in 2023 as the SEND Local Area Partnership Board with an independent Chair, and will continue to provide oversight, challenge and support of the delivery of improvements within the SEND & AP Improvement Plan and SEF. In addition, formal oversight is provided by the Education Attainment

and Improvement Board (EAIB) and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

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



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

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. The outcome of the inspection was that a [Written Statement of Action](#) (WSOA) was required and this identified 10 significant areas of weakness. The WSOA was approved by Ofsted on 1 July 2022.

- 1.2 Progress in implementing the WSOA was previously overseen by the SEND Improvement Group which was reset as the SEND Local Area Partnership Board in Autumn 2023. The Board is chaired by an independent chair, with updates provided to this committee. The Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England's SEND Advisors meet monthly with Council and health officers to monitor progress and agree priority actions. The next formal monitoring meeting is scheduled for 23 April 2024.

2. UPDATE ON THE SEND IMPROVEMENT PLAN INCORPORATING THE WSOA

- 2.1 A diagnostic review of the SEND service was completed in Autumn 2023/Spring 2024 and this work informed the SEND SEF. Recommendations were reported to the DCS together with the anticipated impact.

- 2.2 The second meeting of the SEND Local Area Improvement Board was held in February 2024. The 10 aspects of the WSOA were incorporated into a refreshed 4 priority action plan:

Priority 1: Increasing & Improving Inclusion of children and young people in mainstream settings ensuring appropriate preparation for adulthood.

Priority 2: Increasing confidence of parents and carers in services and systems across all the partners in Tameside ensuring appropriate preparation for adulthood.

Priority 3: Involving children & young people who have SEND, and their families, in decisions about their future and in the shaping, accountability, quality and delivery of services ensuring appropriate preparation for adulthood.

Priority 4: Improving quality, accuracy & timeliness with which we identify and assess children's and young people's needs including ensuring appropriate preparation for Adulthood

- 2.3 Each of the 4 priority areas are co-led by strategic leaders representing the local area partnership with members from across the partnership contributing to the delivery of the actions identified within each priority.

- 2.4 To secure improved governance and partnership accountability for the delivery of each of these priority areas a Priority Delivery Group has been established which is co-chaired by the Assistant Director of Education at Tameside and the Deputy Chief Executive of the ICB. The work stream leads are held to account for progress towards the delivery of the priorities, report on achievements, ensure the actions within each priority are appropriate and updated, and can engage in a solution focussed approach to ensure continued progress and delivery. Exception reports will then be presented to the Local Area Partnership Board to secure improvement at pace, through challenge and support. The first exception reporting will take place at the Board meeting on the 17 April 2024.

- 2.5 The new Local Offer website will launch in March 2024 after extensive consultation with parents, carers, children, young people, partner agencies and stakeholders. The Local Offer website will provide clear, detailed, accessible, and up-to-date information about the provision available and how it can be accessed.
- 2.6 The Tameside Graduated Response has completed the first stage of its co-production with schools. A wider multi-agency partnership conference takes place on the 20 March 2024 with DfE attendance with the aim of finalising the co-producing a Graduated Response. The Graduated Response focusses upon ensuring that children and young people with SEN get the right support at the right time in their schools and settings.
- 2.7 Tameside's aim is to ensure that all children and young people receive an Education Health and Care Plan within the statutory 20 weeks, if assessed as in need.
- 2.8 Tameside experienced a 30% increase in service demand for EHCPs between 2022 and 2023. This impacted upon the service's ability to meet statutory timelines for EHCP's issued within 20 weeks. In January 2023, 79% of between EHCPs were issued within the 20-week timeframe, this declined significantly throughout the year. January 2024 data showed that new processes put in place did not have the desired impact. The new AD for Education introduced additional capacity and new team structure in February 2024 and at the time of writing, the proportion of EHCPs being finalised within 20 weeks had improved to 46%.
- 2.9 Tameside have a statutory responsibility to ensure that all children and young people with an EHCP have an annual review of their plan. Tameside need to ensure the annual review process is timely, well established and embedded into business as usual.
- 2.10 Tameside carries circa 3000 active EHCPs and has a statutory requirement to ensure each plan is reviewed annually. To reduce the backlog of annual reviews, an interim backlog team was recruited in October 2023 to implementing an annual review recovery plan. Review of performance data in February 2024 showed there was still further work required. A revised team structure was immediately put in place to recognise performance data and improved caseload management. Team capacity has been calculated on this basis and recruitment is underway to ensure improved demand management and sustainability.
- 2.11 A multi-agency placement, provision and transport panel was established in November 2023 to ensure a transparent, multi-agency approach to placement, provision and transport decisions and panel meetings commenced. The impact of this will be reviewed at the end of March 2024.
- 2.12 An EHC Quality Assurance Framework was introduced in spring 2024. The purpose of this is to improve the experiences of children, young people and families, and to ensure high quality plans which have impact on outcomes of children and young people. This protocol was presented at the SEND Local Area Partnership Board meeting in December 2023 for comment and approval. This work will be reviewed and further developed with multi agency support in April 2024.

3 NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The SEND & AP Improvement and Delivery plans and Performance Scorecard are being refined and will be in final draft form for the next Local Area Partnership Board meeting on 17 April 2024.
- 3.2 Practice and resources are firmly focused service improvement, quality and timeliness. Improving data capture and analysis is at the heart of the drive to securing improvement.

- 3.3 A cycle of learning and continuous improvement will be embedded through the implementation of the wider Children's Services 'Brilliant at the Basics' principles. This will see the implementation of practice standards, overseen by the Children's Services Directorate Management Team (DMT).
- 3.4 Advanced multi-agency preparation for upcoming Ofsted monitoring visits and SEND Local Area Inspection is continually in place and reviewed weekly. This incorporates reflection and learning from the recent Children's Social Care Inspection.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The creation of the SEND Local Area Partnership governance and accountability structures have enabled the refreshed focus upon securing sustainable improvements at pace underpinned with rigour.
- 4.2 The refreshed improvement and delivery plans which integrate all aspects of required improvement and reflect the 10 points from the WSOA allow the Local Area to have clear oversight of what is required, against a clear timeframe to ensure impact is evidenced and progress closely monitored.
- 4.3 The strong governance put in place through the Local Area Partnership Board and EAIB enable forensic challenge and support which will drive improvements, and ensure that the outcomes and experiences for children, young people, their families and carers, across Tameside are significantly improved and at least meet required standards.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

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