

Meeting with parents and carers

**Cllr Karen McCarthy, Cabinet Member
Children, Young People and Families
Sue Harrison, Director Children and
Families**

John Coughlan, SEND Commissioner

18 January 2023



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Before we start...

thank you!

Plan for this meeting

- Background
- Why is this time different?
- Progress made so far
- Independent review of SENDIASS report
- Mythbusting
- Opportunity to ask questions



Background

- SEND services in Birmingham have been failing families, children and young people for some time
- There have been other improvement plans that have not been delivered
- Critical Ofsted and CQC inspections in 2018 and 2021 found widescale failings
 - EHCPs
 - school placements and joint working
 - health assessments and treatments delays.
- There had also been issues with home to school transport
- This led to Birmingham being the first (and so far only) area under DfE statutory intervention for its SEND services
- This intervention includes a Commissioner, John Coughlan
- Commissioner's first report to the Secretary of State last May confirmed the system is severely broken and made a series of recommendations
- The Commissioner will be submitting his next report in February.

Why is this time different?

- We have a SEND Commissioner appointed by the Department for Education who reports our progress to the Secretary of State for Education.
- There would be consequences for Birmingham City Council should progress not be made in a timely fashion (ie to the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) deadlines)
- There is a reconfigured SEND Improvement Board chaired by the SEND Commissioner
- Each meeting of the SEND Improvement Board starts with a lived experience story from a young person's perspective
- The work of the APP is included in the Children and Families Directorate Improvement Plan and monitored through the Children and Families Improvement Board, with oversight from the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- The Director Children and Families meets with the Parent Carer Forum regularly to hear experiences first hand
- So the governance around improvement is very different.

Why is this time different?

- Deborah Cadman appointed as permanent Chief Executive
- Sue Harrison appointed as permanent Director of Children's Services
- Helen Ellis appointed as permanent Director of SEND and Inclusion
- New children's leadership team
- Bid for UNICEF Child Friendly City Status
- BCC – Putting children at the heart of the council

Progress so far – some evidence but still a long way to go

- Home to school transport much improved
- School placement round delivered to timescales
- More school places delivered, applications submitted for three new special schools
- SENAR improvement journey – moving from process driven to child-centered
 - Substantive structure designed and agreed currently staffed by agency workers
 - All children have an assigned case worker, contactable by email and phone
 - All schools have an assigned link worker
 - We are working on building relationships, this is taking time
 - February Full Council budget decision will enable permanent staff to be put into place
- We are committed to working in partnership with our Parent Carer Forum and co-production is at the heart of everything
- Local Offer website much improved.

Progress made so far

- Health services are now being delivered under an Integrated Care System (ICS), designed to bring services together and make children the priority
- Most unacceptable waiting times being brought down, although still some way to go
- A big focus on developing plans to deliver early help and support without the need for diagnosis, where appropriate
- Birmingham Children's Partnership is committed to supporting children with SEND in the Children and Young People's Plan to be launched in April
- New models for joint planning, commissioning and delivery
- Inclusion Strategy and SEND Strategy have been co-produced and are about to launch with schools to reinforce the need for a culture change around inclusion

SENDIASS

- SEND Information, Advice and Support Service
- Support is extremely valued by some parents
- Expanded its brief during COVID and due to the dysfunction of SENAR which led to a lack of focus on core advocacy functions
- SEND Commissioner recommended the council commission an external review of the service
- Independent expert review found significant issues that must be addressed
- The council is considering the review's findings and the way forward to ensure a compliant, arms-length service which delivers support for parents

Mythbusting

- SENDIASS is not closing or reducing in terms of budget or staff
- Family support workers currently attached to SENDIASS are moving to Birmingham Children's Trust where they will continue to support their families and will receive appropriate oversight in a family support environment
- A core team of SENDIASS case workers will continue to be based in the council and provide advocacy, support and advice regarding the SEND Code of Practice and with the tribunal process, where required
- The service will continue as above until the council agrees the best way forward. This would be part of the democratic decision making process, in the public domain.

Q & A

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