

SEND IMPROVEMENT BOARD UPDATE:

December 2023

Dear all,

December's SEND Improvement Board, focussed on the 24 month stocktake and provided an update on the progress between May and November of the 12 areas of significant weakness, as outlined in the [Accelerated Progress Plan](#).

Colleagues leading on each of the areas attended to present updates, and the overall consensus was hugely positive, although equally everyone recognised that there were still improvements to be made to ensure impact was felt on the ground.

School Improvement leads Jaswinder Didially and Lisa Smith, presented on the proposed New School Relationship Model. The new model focuses on developing a clearly defined education strategy across the city, and ensure work continues to engage with schools, and strengthen relationships; all with the common goal of helping Birmingham children to thrive. The new model had so far been well received by schools and stakeholders, and discussion took place around the importance of ensuring consistency with all schools in delivering appropriate quality of teaching and reasonable adjustments for children and young people with additional needs.

It was agreed that the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme was providing much needed insight and recommendations that would help drive forward the work in Birmingham. We are well placed to move into Phase Two of the programme.

Claire Paintain, NHS, provided an update on waiting times in health and explained that, since COVID, there had been a notable increase in referrals. However, the NHS were working hard to tackle wait times for each of the therapy services: Occupational Health, Physio, Speech and Language Therapy and Neuro Developmental ASD and ADHD. There had also been national pressure around medication for ADHD and contingencies had been put in place to support families. It was agreed that Claire and Pam would work closely to ensure families were fully aware of the situation.

An update on Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG) was provided by Heather Wood. The guidance provided clarity on appropriate offers of support, what to do, and how to access resources to best support children. The guidance had been well received by schools and parents, and favourable comments made:



“If only there had been something like this when my son was at school ... if I had known what his school could offer then I probably wouldn’t have gone for an EHCP!” – Parent

“This could change quite significantly children’s lives” – Oliver Wilson, Woodhouse Primary School

The Co-production Awards Scheme was approved by the Board, and would ensure that co-production improvement throughout the city was recognised. Accreditation for the scheme would be investigated in order to raise its profile and encourage applicants. The Board were privileged to watch a video from 22 year old Birmingham based Zeze, whose personal reflection demonstrated the power of person-centred co-production. Many congratulations to Zeze who has now gone on to set up her own successful autism charity.

Thank you also to Headteacher Oliver Wilson, Woodhouse Primary School, whose video message praised the approach being taken by the SENAR team in setting up a Task and Finish Group to ensure the local area developed a common understanding of what ‘good’ looked like for Annual Reviews and EHCPs, including the quality of professional advice from colleagues in education, health and social care.

Pam Armstrong, Chair of Parent Carer Forum, commented that whilst she could see a positive change in the way in which the services were working together it was important to note that parents were still not feeling the changes on the ground. Engagement with parents needed to be a main priority for everyone.

The Board said farewell to Andy Couldrick who will shortly retire as Chief Executive of Birmingham Children’s Trust and take up a new role as Chair of the Birmingham Children’s Trust Board. Andy remarked that tangible improvements could be seen from where the service was 12 months ago. Improved working practices and collaborative working had all impacted positively, but it remained important to keep striving for further improvements and consistency.

In closing the meeting, John Coughlan congratulated everyone on the quality of information that had been provided. It clearly demonstrated that everyone was passionate about what they were doing and endeavouring to achieve.

Thank you once again to all who contributed and brought such positive energy to the meeting. We’ll very much look forward to reporting back in the New Year. Until then, our very best wishes for the Festive Season.

Sue Harrison, Strategic Director Children and Families

John Coughlan, SEND Commissioner