

## Divisions Affected - All

# PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30<sup>th</sup> June 2023

## Education Health Care Needs Assessment Timeliness

### Report by Anne Coyle, Interim Corporate Director of Children's Services

1. **The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is ASKED to** note the updated information contained in this paper regarding Education Health Care Needs (EHCP) both as per national publication (Jan 2023) and as at June 2023.
2. The report also provides an update on the timeliness of Assessments, the annual performance, and the impact of improvement work.

## Executive Summary

3. Nationally there has been an increase in initial requests for EHCPs (23%) and EHCs (7%). The number of plans issued within the 20-week target nationally was 50.7% as recorded in January 2023 and Oxfordshire's performance was 4%.
4. Regular reporting to Cabinet on EHCP delivery through Unity began in November 2020.
5. Monthly reporting to the Department for Education began in November 2021.
6. Issues around the timeliness of Education Health Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) were first reported in June 2021. An improvement plan was put in place and a request for additional funding to support the service was agreed by council in February 2023.
7. In month for June 2023, timeliness is currently 60.4%.

## National Context

8. [SEN2](#), a Department for Education annual statutory return was published in June 2023. This reports the data for Local Authorities in relation to SEND for the previous calendar year.

9. There was a 23% increase in requests for assessment nationally in 2022.
10. During 2022 nationally the timeliness of Education Health Care Needs Assessments was 50.7%. This was a 9.2% reduction from the previous year.
11. Oxfordshire's timeliness was 4%

## **How Did We Get To 4%?**

12. Two metrics are considered in relation to timeliness data: the rolling figure, which is reported nationally, and the in-month figure which we use to monitor performance.
13. In June 2021, additional funding was requested for both the SEND Casework Team and the Educational Psychology Service to support increasing staffing capacity due to the emerging issues around timeliness. Post COVID, we were experiencing month on month increase in requests for assessment.
14. At that time, the SEND Casework Team were holding caseloads averaging 250 children and young people. At that point, the officers carried out all functions from assessments, through to annual reviews to tribunals.
15. The Educational Psychology Service had 11 FTE psychologists. An assessment takes two days, and each psychologist has a blend of assessments and direct work with schools and children. When at full capacity, this means that 44 could be carried out a month against a backdrop of an average of 92 requests per month.
16. Children's Social Care and Health partners are also required to carry out assessments and there were staffing pressures in these services at the time. The partners are a key part of the assessment process of children and young people's needs and their reports are crucial for a thorough understanding of need and provision. (see figure 1 for timeliness of professional reports).
17. A new business system (Liquid Logic) was implemented in August 2021. Staff spent hours in training in how to use the system and data was not accurately reported in the new system. Many requests got misplaced by the system and a system reboot was needed to release the files. The team had to use two systems concurrently slowing all processes down.
18. The funding was agreed in March 2022 (2-year COVID Grant). Both teams were provided with additional resource to immediately add staffing capacity and in the midterm look at a team restructure. By this time, the backlog (assessments over 20 weeks) had grown to 186.
19. In July 2022, an improvement plan was created by the team and put in place, there were 777 cases undergoing assessment, of these just under 300 were late. Rolling timeliness at this point was 7% and in January 2023, 4%.
20. In August 2022, Health experienced an outage of their Carenotes system, meaning no historical information could be accessed for any of the children already known to the community services teams.

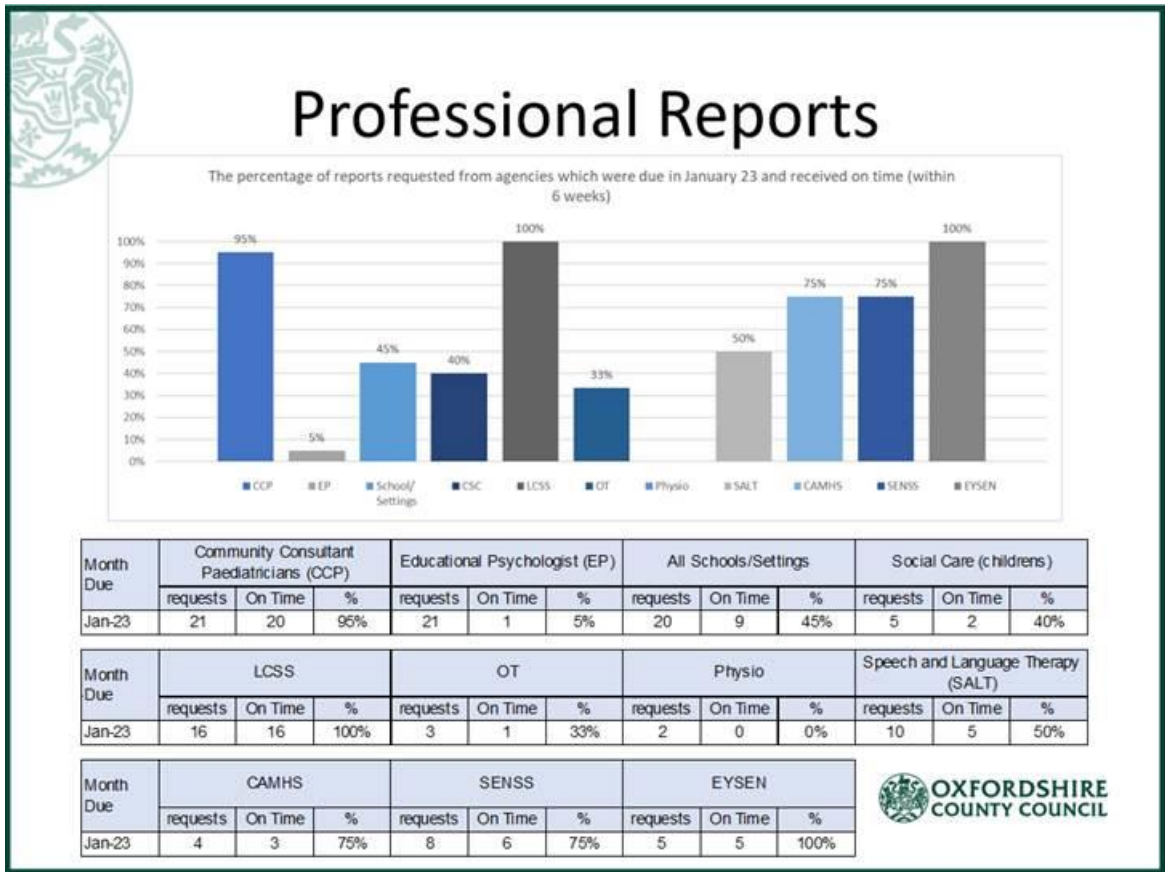


Figure 1: Professional reports completed to statutory timescales Jan 2023

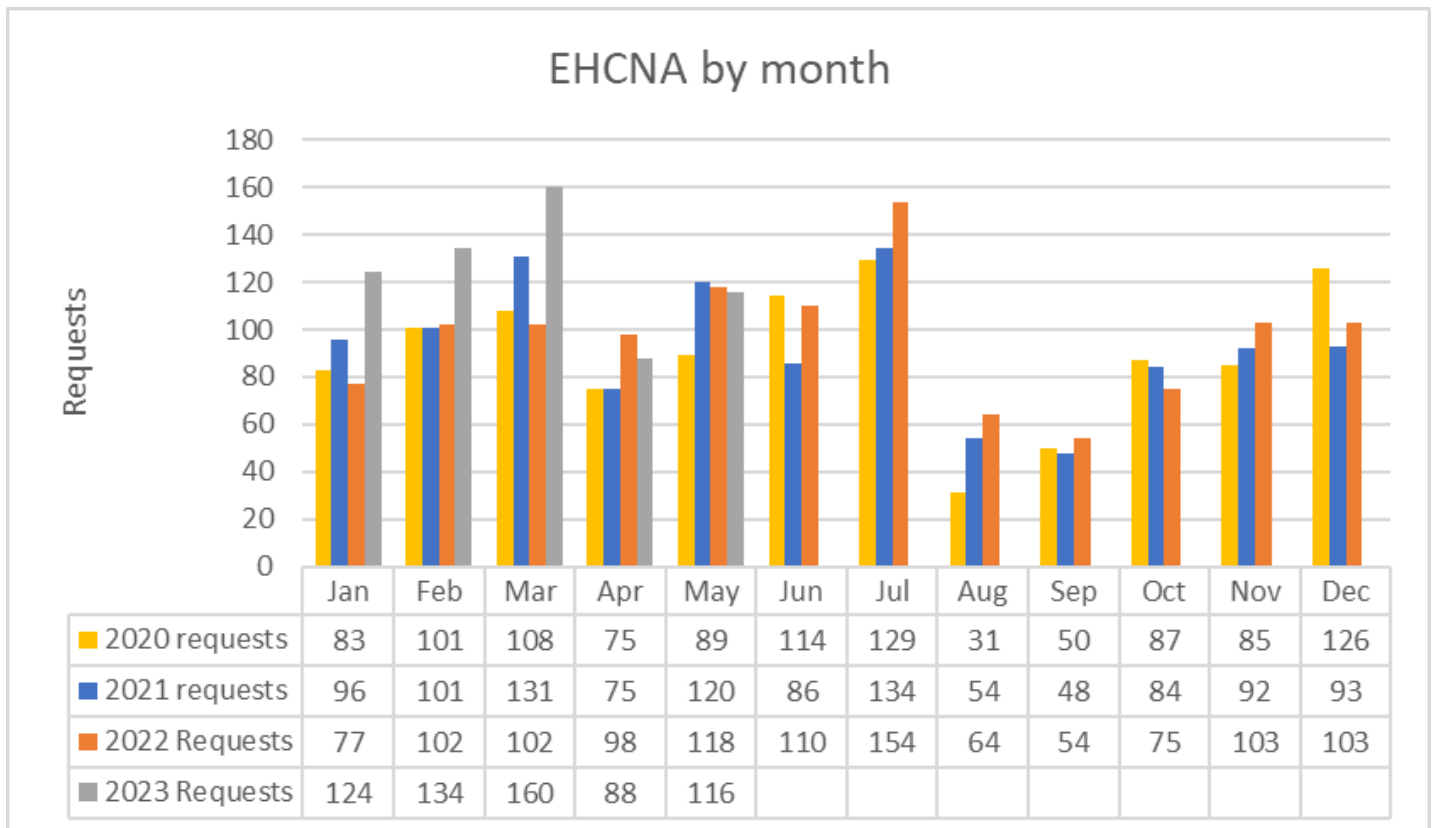


Figure 2: Monthly requests for statutory assessment

## Current Position and Forecast

21. Monthly reporting to the Department for Education has taken place since September 2022. The improvement plan and forecast were approved by the DfE in January 2023. At that point, the forecast to put Oxfordshire back to national was August 2024.
22. The Educational Psychology Service were tasked to work with more locum and agency staff to work through the back log and current cases. A high % of COVID 19 funding was provided to the service to fund this. The service is now delivering between 20-25 assessments a week, with over half of these being on time and the figure is increasing as we move through the year. The Head of SEND has been monitoring this weekly and through 1-1s with Service Manager.
23. In Oxfordshire, for the first quarter of 2023, there has been a 29% increase in requests for assessment as the same period last year.
24. The current in month position is 60.3% and rolling monthly figure 38.7%.
25. As the performance continues to be monitored closely by senior officers, the improvements needed to meet the forecast target have been consistently met or improved on. The Performance and Data Team will carry out a new forecast based on the current performance.

### Comparison of % EHCPs completed within 20 weeks to target



Figure 3: Target and completion rates

## **Corporate Policies and Priorities**

26. The Local Area SEND Strategy links to priority 2 (Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire), priority 3 (Prioritise the Health and Wellbeing of Residents) and priority 7 (Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential) in the OCC Corporate Plan.

## **Financial Implications.**

27. £500k investment provided to the casework team to ensure continued improvement. Some of this money has been distributed to the Business Support Team as a key function. Agency staff are in post whilst permanent recruitment is ongoing.

## **Legal Implications**

28. This report is for information only, there are no new proposals.

## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

29. As part of the SEND consultation in 2022, Equality Impact Assessment was completed covering the protected characteristics set out in the Equalities Act 2010.
30. Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act 2010 and children and young people with SEND face significantly greater challenges in learning than their peers or have a disability which hinders their access to the teaching, curriculum and facilities typically found in mainstream educational settings.
31. The ECIA are 'live' documents that are subject to review and amended as the developments progress.

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