

Divisions Affected -

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30th March 2023

SEND Developments

Report by Kevin Gordon, Corporate Director of Children's Services, Oxfordshire County Council

1. **The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is ASKED to** note the information contained in this paper regarding the national context, successful grant applications and performance updates.

Executive Summary

2. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Implementation Plan was launched by the Department for Education in March 2023.
3. £3.3m of funding has been confirmed for year 1 of Oxfordshire's SEND Early Intervention work
4. Progress is being made in the timeliness of Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) National Context

5. On Thursday 2nd March 2023, the Government launched its long-awaited Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision (SENDAP) Improvement Plan following the public consultation on the SEND and AP Green Paper (March 2022). [SEND and alternative provision improvement plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-and-alternative-provision-improvement-plan)
6. There are no legislative changes in the plan with much of the implementation planned to start in 2024/5. The plan includes; national standards, a national Education Health Care Plan template, focused initial teacher training in SEND and a refreshed National Award for SENDCOs.
7. A key reform in the SENDAP Improvement Plan is to address the issues of supply of specialist placements and alternative provision, reducing the need for costly independent provision.

8. Funding for two additional special schools was made through the Department for Education (DfE) Free Schools programme. Oxfordshire were not successful on this occasion, due to the large number of applications received. Most of the successful bids were from LAs who, unlike Oxfordshire, had not had a successful bid in the previous application round. This is an indication of the urgent need for additional special education provision across the country.
9. Although the free school bids were unsuccessful on this occasion, alternative funding opportunities are being explored.

SEND Early Intervention

10. Oxfordshire SEND Team have continued to develop the early intervention model with partners whilst waiting for the outcome of the Green Paper. Much of the SENDAP implementation plan aligns with work that is already underway.
11. The Ordinarily Available Toolkit was co-designed with SENDCOs and launched in February. This sets out expectations across Oxfordshire Schools and Settings as to what should be delivered in all classrooms to support learners. Initial feedback has been positive, and a full review will take place in 6 months. [SEND Ordinarily available toolkit \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ordinarily-available-toolkit)
12. The SENDCO Helpdesk launched in February following feedback that many SENDCOs feel isolated in their work and would welcome an opportunity to problem solve with working SENDCOs to further develop their graduated approach. The focus now is promoting this offer across all early years and primary settings and a secondary offer is planned.
13. SEND Live was held on the 9th March and 150 delegates attended the event, with a theme of the art of the possible. Initial feedback analysis shows very high satisfaction and a desire to collaborate with each other and LA officers on a more regular basis.
14. Other areas of work include; inclusive supports series, transitions working group, recruitment, and retention of Teaching Assistants, SWERL (Supporting Wellbeing and Emotional Resilience in Learning), Early Years Targeted Support for settings in Banbury, Enhanced Pathways and developing a virtual SENDCo network.
15. The significant work in the team is the SEND Framework. This involves working with partners across education, health, social care and third sector to map out the universal, targeted and specialist offer. There are two main objectives 1) to ensure a clear and easily accessible offer 2) to ensure no duplication or gaps.
16. OCC volunteered to be one of the first 20 councils to work with the Department for Education on the [Delivering Better Value](#) programme to identify sustainable changes that can drive high quality outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This work started in September 2022, to late January 2023. Partnership work with school leaders and families was a key

feature. OCC submitted an evidence-based grant application to assist the implementation of those changes and have now been awarded £1m.

17. Schools Forum were asked to approve a Block Transfer of 0.5% of Schools DSG funding to High Needs (SEN) to fund the early intervention work that the Delivering Better Value work identified. This was not agreed by Schools Forum, so the decision had to be deferred to the Secretary of State and approval was granted to make the transfer. The total funds are £2.3m.
18. The Delivering Better Value work highlighted two main areas to address; parental confidence in mainstream school and the variation of the offer both school to school and class to class. The Early Intervention fund for year one which will support mainstream schools in developing their offer, is a combined £3.3m.
19. A strategic group has been established that includes colleagues from across education, schools, social care, CAMHS and parent carer representatives in order to have oversight of the three key workstreams. These are 1) Special School Outreach 2) Inreach/outreach Hubs across the county and 3) Trauma informed approach.
20. All three of these pieces of work place the child and young person at the heart whilst addressing variation and increasing parental confidence in the offer.

SEND Performance

21. We expect most children and young people to have their needs met in their local schools without the need for statutory assessment.
22. Education Health Care Needs Assessments are the statutory assessment process for children and young people where the school have identified a special educational need, have implemented a robust graduated response but consider that an additional assessment and provision will be needed to sustain academic progress for the CYP.
23. The statutory timeframe for this process is 20 weeks. The assessment coordination sits within the SEND Casework team and the reliance on high quality advice to carry out the assessment relies on Educational Psychologists, Advisory Teachers, Social Workers, Therapists, Consultants etc. All of these service areas have significant demands on them and their ability to produce reports by week 12 of the process has an impact on the LA being able to carry out assessments to timescales.

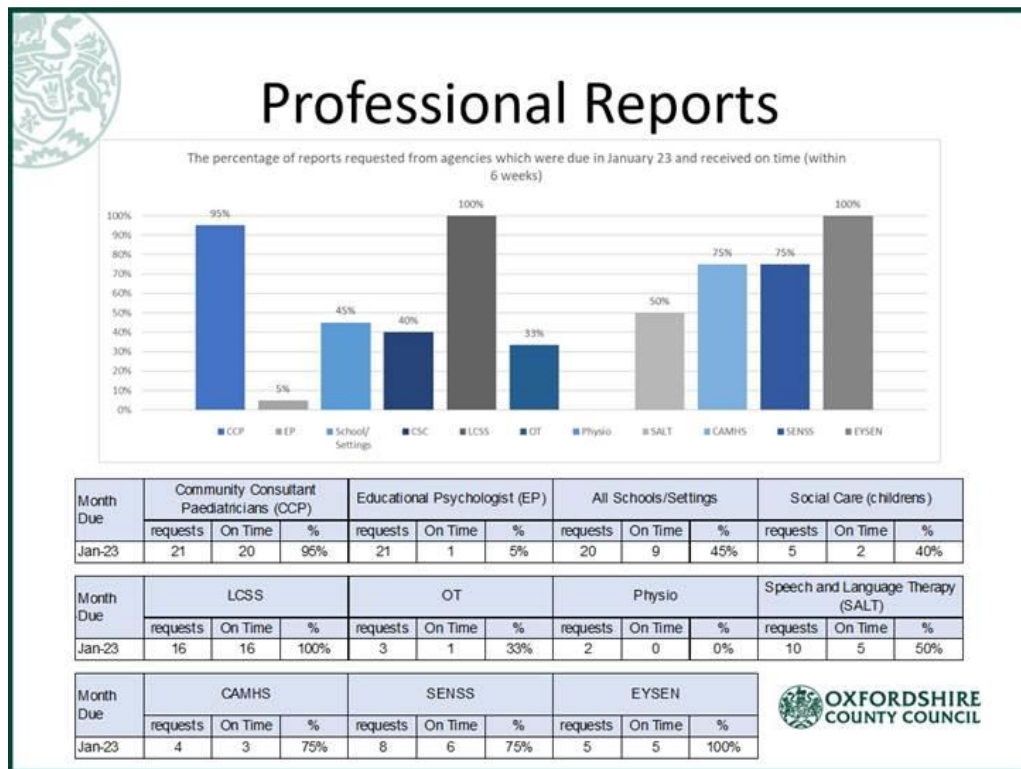
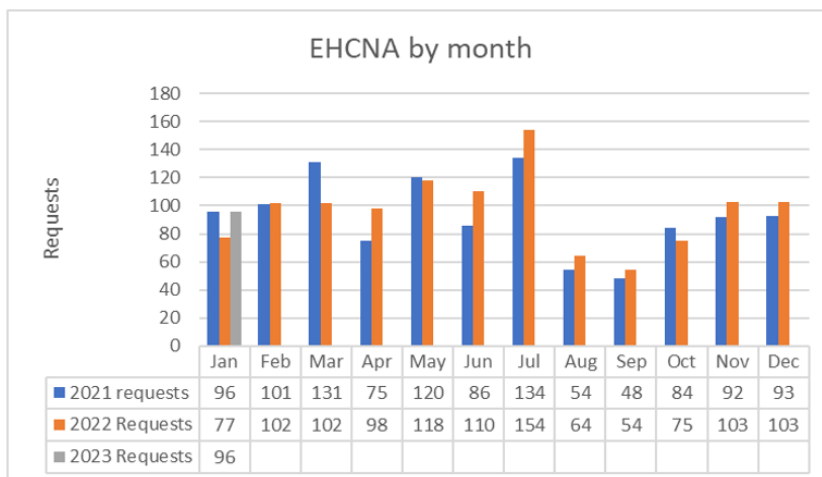


Figure 1: Professional reports completed to statutory timescales Jan 2023

24. At the end of February 2023, 20% of assessments were completed on time, giving a cumulative 16% completion rate. The forecast is that by August 2024, the timescale will be at national average which is currently 59.9% [Education, health and care plans, Reporting year 2022 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics).
25. In August 2022, there were 741 assessments in process, of which 312 were overdue. On 13th March 2023 there were 525 assessments, with 130 overdue. With continued high number of requests each month, this means that the team must complete more assessments than are being requested to improve the performance and clear the backlog.
26. The backlog of assessments was a combination of increased demand for assessments accompanied with a staffing shortage across SEN Officers, Educational Psychologists, Social Workers, Speech and Language Therapists and other professionals that carry out the assessments. For 2021 (most recent national data available) there was a 23% increase nationally in requests for assessment and Oxfordshire have seen similar trends. There are shortages of staff in these professions across the southeast and beyond.
27. It will take around 13 months to get back to national average % due to needing to ensure that assessments that are overdue are processed as quickly as possible whilst also keeping up with new requests. The £500k revenue investment from Council will support in increasing the size of the team to be able to process both groups of assessments and get the performance back in line with national averages.



Requests and Assessments



- 96 requests were received in January 2023. This represents a 25% increase on the same period in 2022 and in line with 2021 levels.



Figure 2: Monthly requests for statutory assessment

28. Phase Transfer is the process by which children move into the next phase of their education. For those moving into reception and year 7, the statutory deadline was 15th February.
29. 484 children and young people were part of this cohort. On the 15th February, 89% of final plans were issued. On the 13th March, 96% were issued and it is forecast that by the 31st March, 100% will be issued.
30. The financial implications are set out in the report.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

31. 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.

32. See information above in paragraphs 9, 16, 18 and 28

Legal Implications

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

Equality & Inclusion Implications

34. As part of the SEND consultation in 2022, Equality Impact Assessment was completed covering the protected characteristics set out in the Equalities Act 2010.
35. In particular, 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.
36. The ECIA are 'live' documents that are subject to review and amended as the developments progress.

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Background papers: [The national funding formula for schools and high needs: Executive summary](#)

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