

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: Update on the Priority Action Plan

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr John Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services; Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement

Date response requested:² 23 April 2024

Response to report:

The priority action plan (PAP) was developed by the Local Area Partnership in response to the outcome of the Ofsted/ CQC area inspection of SEND published in September 2023. The PAP was signed off by Ofsted in January 2024. There was some Member involvement in the development of the PAP, but it is noted that the PAP was developed and submitted prior to the new Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee (EYP) was established.

Aspects of the PAP are also reported to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members sit on the membership of the SEND Improvement and Assurance Board, and there has been further reporting to EYP on the progress against the improvements.

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

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In respect to the Committee’s observations around further communication to all Members, the Children, Education and Families Directorate have committed to a series of All Member briefings on a wide range of operational and strategic areas relating to education and SEND.

Future reports in respect of the PAP and SEND/ education landscape, that are received by EYP, could focus upon the detailed reports from the delivery subgroups via the co-chairs, who are managing the operational business as usual and changes to services within the workstreams.

In respect of the observation on the development of further empathy and clarity in respect of complaints and queries and concerns, although there is more work to do, we have developed increased responsiveness and a more relational style, encouraging staff to have ‘in person’ conversations to resolve issues. We have had increasing feedback about an improvement in this area.

There has been continuous work on communication and engagement with the wider public, parents and carers, stakeholders and Members. There are specific workstreams on engagement and communications which includes ongoing development of relational practice in communications to parents, carers and children. This has also encompassed the approach to complaints, queries and concerns raised by parents and carers.

Specific workstreams and actions are improving the voices of children in young people not only in the PAP but in the continuous wider improvement of services in SEND and across Council and partner agencies. The approaches include a focus on individual case response and hearing the voice of children through to wider strategic engagement.

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
<p>1. That the Council should ensure that the voice of children and young people is sought and heard more clearly within the Priority Action Plan</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The priority action plan has a workstream dedicated to supporting the participation, engagement and co production with children and young people. A youth SEND forum has been established as an advisory/ steering group linking to the SEND Improvement and</p>

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<p>and within the work arising from it.</p>		<p>Assurance Board and to other activity for children and Young People with SEND across the Council and partnerships. A wider mechanism for consultation to reach children and young people to participate and provide feedback and views on a wide range of matters that matter to them, has been developed. This mechanism will be fully operational in the Autumn 2024.</p>
<p>2. That the Council should arrange for members of the Committee to be invited to sit on the Task and Finish groups.</p>	<p>Rejected</p>	<p>The recommendation originated from EYP in January 2024 where there was a conversation in which members thought they would be involved in SEND improvement task and finish groups and were asking again to get involved. The interest and willingness to get involved is appreciated, but it could not be promised or confirmed.</p> <p>The recommendation was for the Director to consider involvement of Members directly in those groups. Having taken advice and thought through the potential conflicts of interest, it is her view that as soon as Councillors become involved in technical and operational work in task and finish groups, they immediately make themselves accountable for the activity/ decisions and outcomes. This will occur even if they are participant observers. It blurs the political/ operational boundary, and they can't hold themselves to account. The holding to account is the role of cabinet and Committees.</p>