



Notice of a Meeting

Education Scrutiny Committee Wednesday, 23 September 2020 at 1.00 pm Virtual

Please note that due to guidelines imposed on social distancing by the Government the meeting will be held virtually. If you wish to view proceedings please click on this [Live Stream Link](#) However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Membership

Chairman Councillor Michael Waine
Deputy Chairman - Councillor John Howson

Councillors: Ted Fenton Jeannette Matelot Emma Turnbull
Mrs Anda Fitzgerald- Gill Sanders
O'Connor

Co-optees:

By Invitation: Donald McEwan Carole Thomson

Notes: *Date of next meeting: 25 November 2020*

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

- a focus on the following key areas:
 - work in relation to the education strategy, and including review of an annual report on progress;
 - constructive challenge on performance issues highlighting issues where the Committee can support the improvement dialogue;
 - reviewing the Council's education functions including early years, Special Education Needs and school place planning;
 - reviewing the progress of, and any issues emanating from, the School Organisation Stakeholder Group with regard to admissions patterns and arrangements;
 - reviewing issues raised by the Schools Forum.
- assists the Council in its role of championing good educational outcomes for Oxfordshire's children and young people;
- provides a challenge to schools and academies and to hold them to account for their academic performance;
- promotes jointed up working across organisations in the education sector within Oxfordshire.

For more information about this Committee please contact:

Chairman	-	<i>Councillor Michael Waine Email: michael.waine@oxfordshire.gov.uk</i>
Senior Policy Officer	-	<i>Robin Rogers, Tel: 07789 923206 Email: robin.rogers@oxfordshire.gov.uk</i>
Committee Officer	-	<i>Deborah Miller, Tel: 07920 084239 deborah.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk</i>

Yvonne Rees
Chief Executive

September 2020

About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 63 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 678,000 residents. These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:

- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets up to 6 times a year or more. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session.

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.

AGENDA

1. **Introduction and Welcome**
2. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**
3. **Declarations of Interest - see guidance note of the back page**
4. **Petitions and Public Address**

This Education Scrutiny meeting will be held virtually in order to conform with current guidelines regarding social distancing. Normally requests to speak at this public meeting are required by 9 am on the day preceding the published date of the meeting. However, during the current situation and to facilitate these new arrangements we are asking that requests to speak are submitted by no later than 9am four working days before the meeting i.e. 9 am on 17 September 2020. Requests to speak should be sent to deborah.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk together with a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9 am 2 working days before the meeting.

Where a meeting is held virtually and the addressee is unable to participate virtually their written submission will be accepted.

5. **Covid-19 Update**

1.00 pm

The Committee have requested to receive an update on the impact of COVID-19 on Education and Oxfordshire Schools. Accordingly, Corporate Director of Children's Services, Kevin Gordon and the Deputy Director for Education, Hayley Good will attend the meeting to give a verbal update on the current situation.

6. **Update on Alternative Provision (AP) commissioning arrangements** (Pages 1 - 8)

1.45 pm

Report by the Head of Learner Engagement (**ESC6**).

Education Scrutiny Committee has requested an update on the Recommissioning of Alternative Provision for children and schools in Oxfordshire. This follows the update provided to Education Scrutiny Committee on 1st February 2020 and papers provided to Schools Forum lastly on 17th June 2020 for information.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to consider and note the report.

7. Performance Update on Education Health & Care Plans in Oxfordshire
(Pages 9 - 14)

2.05 pm

Report by Deputy Director for Children's Services and Education (**ESC7**).

To receive a report on ECHP process and performance including a focus on Exclusions/Elective Home Education/Part time timetable and on the Early Intervention Service.

The Education Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the progress made in relation to Education Health and Care Plans for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

8. Forward Plan and Committee Business (Pages 15 - 16)

2.25 pm

A copy of the draft work programme is attached (**ESC9**) to provide an opportunity to discuss and prioritise future topics for the Committee, potential approaches to its work and to discuss the schedule for future meetings, to then be finalised in consultation with the Director for Children's Services at the October Agenda Planning meeting.

Declarations of Interest

The duty to declare.....

Under the Localism Act 2011 it is a criminal offence to

- (a) fail to register a disclosable pecuniary interest within 28 days of election or co-option (or re-election or re-appointment), or
- (b) provide false or misleading information on registration, or
- (c) participate in discussion or voting in a meeting on a matter in which the member or co-opted member has a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Whose Interests must be included?

The Act provides that the interests which must be notified are those of a member or co-opted member of the authority, **or**

- those of a spouse or civil partner of the member or co-opted member;
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as husband/wife
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as if they were civil partners.

(in each case where the member or co-opted member is aware that the other person has the interest).

What if I remember that I have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the Meeting?.

The Code requires that, at a meeting, where a member or co-opted member has a disclosable interest (of which they are aware) in any matter being considered, they disclose that interest to the meeting. The Council will continue to include an appropriate item on agendas for all meetings, to facilitate this.

Although not explicitly required by the legislation or by the code, it is recommended that in the interests of transparency and for the benefit of all in attendance at the meeting (including members of the public) the nature as well as the existence of the interest is disclosed.

A member or co-opted member who has disclosed a pecuniary interest at a meeting must not participate (or participate further) in any discussion of the matter; and must not participate in any vote or further vote taken; and must withdraw from the room.

Members are asked to continue to pay regard to the following provisions in the code that *“You must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself”* or *“You must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned.....”*.

Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting should you have any doubt about your approach.

List of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:

Employment (includes *“any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain”*.), **Sponsorship, Contracts, Land, Licences, Corporate Tenancies, Securities.**

For a full list of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and further Guidance on this matter please see the Guide to the New Code of Conduct and Register of Interests at Members’ conduct guidelines. <http://intranet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/Insite/Elected+members/> or contact Glenn Watson on **07776 997946** or glenn.watson@oxfordshire.gov.uk for a hard copy of the document.

This page is intentionally left blank

Division(s): N/A

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

UPDATE ON ALTERNATIVE PROVISION (AP) COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS

Report by Head of Learner Engagement

RECOMMENDATION

The Education Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to consider and note this report.

Introduction

1. This Committee last received a report on plans to commission a range of alternative provision for Oxfordshire with effect from September 2021 in February 2020. This report is by way of an update.
2. Since September 2019 further discussions have been initiated to secure effective and affordable alternative provision through the Radcliffe Academy Trust at Meadowbrook College for the interim period to September 2021.
3. A full programme of work has commenced for the tendering of longer-term commissioned alternative education places.
4. Oxfordshire County Council is obliged, under the terms of the statutory Department for Education (DfE) guidance 'Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England. Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion' to provide full time alternative educational provision for all children permanently excluded from school from day 6 of that permanent exclusion. It is also advisable to offer preventative alternative educational provision to prevent permanent exclusions from schools and to support effective reintegration for those children not in education. Interim educational provision should be available for Looked After Children in need of immediate education and children with Education, Health & Care plans between provision.

Commissioning process

5. The commissioning of alternative provision will help to deliver the vision in the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Learner Engagement Strategy¹ to:

¹ *Learner Engagement Strategy for Oxfordshire*, March 2019

ESC6

- Assess and manage the financial implications for the Local Authority in meeting the increased and varied demand for alternative provision.
 - Ensure good quality, value for money alternative provision is in place so that OCC can meet its statutory responsibilities.
 - Robustly monitor providers to demonstrate improved outcomes for young people requiring alternative provision.
6. The work is managed through an Alternative Provision Project Group, chaired by the Head of Children's Commissioning and sponsored by the Deputy Director for Education. The Board meets monthly to manage a programme of work that includes three distinct but connected projects:
- Project 1: Contract management of existing arrangements with Meadowbrook College
 - Project 2: Buying additional county-wide alternative provision places on top of existing arrangements
 - Project 3: Tendering for county-wide AP services effective from 2021

A full and extensive engagement exercise has taken place with a wide range of stakeholders through online surveys and semi structured face to face interviews. Outcomes are detailed below: -

- Participants in engagement work;
32 children and young people
10 parents/carers
311 professionals broken down as Governors (49), Head Teachers (77), SENCos (56), Teachers (33), CAMHS staff and others.
29 Alternative Providers
- Key messages to prevent exclusions;
Access to early help when problems first arise.
Work together as a whole system.
Have a sufficient supply of good quality, value for money alternative provision.
- Key messages from children and parents/carers on preventing exclusions;
Schools and providers did not always understand or know how to respond to behaviour that was a response to home circumstances or Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
Schools need to understand and manage a child's needs and triggers and make plans that are adhered to.
- Key messages received are as follows:

The majority of children said they either 'had too little help' from the people they went to when things got difficult at school or that 'they tried to help, but it didn't work'

7. A third of the cohort of secondary age children said they go to their parents for help when 'things get difficult at school' which hints at the importance of good communication between home and school.
8. Schools and other professionals linked SEND issues with exclusions, including a need for:
 - Greater funding for SEND
 - More places in specialist settings
 - Reduced waiting times for specialist settings
 - More support for mainstream schools.
9. These were all seen as ways to mitigate the risk of fixed and permanent exclusions.
 - Clear outcomes that Alternative Provision should deliver;
 - Children and young people are safe and feel safe.
 - Improved emotional health and wellbeing including resilience.
 - Improved engagement in learning.
 - Successful pathway back to mainstream school or onto post-16 opportunities.
 - Progress in learning.
 - Improved social skills including friendships, relationships and involvement with the community.
10. Children and young people said;
 - Primary age**
 - Getting help with behaviours*
 - Knowing how to have good friends*
 - Help with choices*
 - Being listened to and understood*
 - Being safe and feeling safe*
 - Feeling good in myself*
 - Secondary age**
 - Life skills: cooking and money*
 - Getting good grades or being trained for my job*
 - Getting fit and healthy/looking after myself*
 - Working towards college, training or getting a job that I want*
 - Being listened to*
11. Satisfaction levels with Alternative Provision in Oxfordshire; Of 311 professionals from schools and other relevant agencies:
 - 8% were satisfied or strongly satisfied with all AP in Oxfordshire
 - 53% of respondents were dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied
 - 37% of respondents had a mixed experience

12. Children, young people who have used AP and their parents and carers said they value:
 - Small classrooms
 - Being with adults who understand them
 - Adults who teach me
 - Over half of secondary age children reported that AP was 'good'
13. Quality, location and gaps in current Alternative Provision; Schools and other professionals said:
 - There is not enough AP in Oxfordshire
 - Not all children are able to access the provision available due to location.
14. The biggest gaps identified were:
 - Outreach support to mainstream schools to prevent exclusion
 - Short term provision away from their usual school to help children re-engage in education
 - Therapeutic support
 - AP for Key Stage 1

Greater collaboration needed;

15. A county wide approach is needed with greater collaboration between all parts of the system including:
 - between mainstream schools and specialist sector;
 - between schools and AP providers so that AP is not just a 'holding placement'
 - between schools, AP providers and the Council's relevant services
 - between primary and secondary school staff.
16. Providers of Alternative Provision:
 - All 29 providers provide for children with SEND Support needs and most can provide for children with an EHCP.
 - Most of the providers who responded are not registered with Ofsted.
 - Two thirds are already providing for Oxfordshire's children.
 - Good spread across the county in terms of where they would be prepared to offer services.
17. Potential barriers to providing for Oxfordshire's children and young people:
 - Recruitment – suitable staff in remote locations
 - potential lack of highly specialised tutors for complex Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs
 - if complexity of case work is high then need staff with higher skill level
 - Travel issues and costs

- Property – venue identification and cost
- Current lease is at an end
- Spot purchasing means we cannot plan our staffing to respond quickly enough to demand; number of hours has not been viable in Oxfordshire.

Summary

18. We heard from a total of 382 stakeholders through 6 surveys and in-depth interviews with 25 children and young people in AP. The response from stakeholders shows that 'AP and the prevention of exclusion' is an area that stakeholders want to be involved in to help achieve improvement for the benefit of pupils, schools and other services.
19. These key messages have informed our work going forward including how we continue to work with the whole system to prevent exclusions; what services we seek to commission from AP providers; and how the Council will work with stakeholders to manage and monitor services in the future.
20. Over the last year the Alternative Provision Commissioning Group has worked with other local authorities to learn about their Alternative Provisions commissioning arrangements.
21. Worked with the Education Skills & Funding Agency about funding and commissioning arrangements.
22. Analysed the spend on Alternative Provision. Currently the spend on top up is c.£3 million with half of that going to the Ratcliffe Academy Trust and the remainder going to other Alternative Providers for children with EHCPs. The latter amount is usually spent through spot purchasing.
23. Existing arrangements with the Ratcliffe Academy Trust have been renegotiated for academic year 2020-21.
24. 1:1 places x 2 at £57,856 top up each place have been decommissioned.
25. Primary places x 8 at £31,821 top up each have been agreed. Extensive discussions to better understand the break down of these costs has not resulted in an increase of Primary capacity for 2020-21.
 1. Key Stage 3 interim places x 18 at £12,938 top up each.
 2. Key Stage 4 long term and interim places x 60 at £12,938 top up each.
 3. Next Steps SEND provision will be decommissioned from August 2021.
 4. All places also attract £10,000 per place funding which is top sliced from Oxfordshire County Council via the Education Skills Funding Agency.

26. The first phase of the work has now concluded, and Oxfordshire County Council has developed a Service Specification with five 'Lots' for Alternative Provision for all key stages and all learners.

<https://procontract.due-north.com/Register>

- a. Early Intervention and Prevention
 - b. Day 6 following permanent exclusion
 - c. Interim full-time or equivalent provision for children awaiting a school place through Oxfordshire County Council's admissions process
 - d. Offsite Alternative curriculum and enrichment service
 - e. In-reach service
27. In July 2020 we formally advertised the opportunity for new or existing Alternative Providers (including schools) to apply for any of these lots by joining a dynamic purchasing system (DPS), which enables the Council to purchase Alternative Provision from quality assured providers using a standard contract and a standard individual placement agreement. Providers and schools can apply to join the DPS at any time from July 2020.
28. We also concluded discussions with the Education Skills Funding Agency and the Radcliffe Academy Trust, confirming the arrangements for Alternative Provision at Meadowbrook College for September 2020. Negotiations for September 2021 onwards will commence with The Radcliffe Academy Trust and Education Skills Funding Agency in September 2020.
29. Partners have been extensively engaged with this work so far. The engagement exercise outcomes have been reported in this paper. There have been seven meetings with leaders of The Radcliffe Academy Trust. The work has been reported to the following groups: Schools Forum, Oxfordshire Secondary Head Teachers Association, Primary Heads Groups and the Learner Engagement and Early Help Board. Before the Lots of work, described above were made available, a meeting was held with the Head Teacher of Meadowbrook College, and a separate meeting with the Chairs of the three Headteacher Associations to discuss the form of wording that was shared with all school leaders. The letter that was sent on 7th July 2020 is shown below;

[attached letter](#)

Timescales

30. The timetable for tendering for county-wide AP services effective from 2021 is as follows:

Activity	Indicative dates
Stakeholder engagement	October 2019 – March 2020
Deadline for initial applications for the AP Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS)	20 July 2020
Notification of acceptance onto the AP DPS	From September 2020
Discussions with Meadowbrook re: September 2020 and 2021	September – mid-November 2020
First tranche of call offs from the AP DPS	From November 2021 November 2020
AP DPS open for ongoing applications	2 November 2020

Financial Implications

31. The available top-up budget for Alternative Provision is £2.96m as described above. In addition, there is £1.06m top sliced by the ESFA from the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in order to fund commissioned places within Oxfordshire.
32. The Alternative Provision budget is funded by the High Needs DSG block which is facing considerable pressure. The outcome of the recommissioning work is contained within the allocated budget by seeking value for money options to best meet the needs of children and young people in Oxfordshire.

Equalities Implications

33. A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the commissioning process to ensure that the needs of all groups of children and young people are able to be met appropriately.
34. Legal, Corporate policies and priorities, risk management and climate and sustainability issues have all been considered in this report and for this wider recommissioning project. Alternative Provision offered closer to where children live will reduce travel generated carbon footprint.

DEBORAH BELL

Head of Learner Engagement

September 2020

This page is intentionally left blank

Division(s): N/A

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 SEPTEMBER 2020

PERFORMANCE UPDATE ON EDUCATION HEALTH & CARE PLANS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Report by Deputy Director for Children's Services and Education

RECOMMENDATION

The Education Scrutiny Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note the progress made in relation to Education Health and Care Plans for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Executive Summary

1. This paper outlines the current position relating to demand and performance of EHCP's in Oxfordshire.

Introduction

2. Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) for children and young people aged up to 25 were introduced in September 2014 as part of the SEND provisions in the Children & Families Act 2014. Local Authorities were required to ensure all plans (previously known as Statements of Special Educational Need) were converted to meet the specifications outlined in the new Code of Practice by 1st April 2018.
3. Education Health and Care plans are legally binding documents that detail the additional education, health and care support required by a child or young person between the ages of 0 -25 years in order to enable them to access learning.
4. The needs identified are outlined and described by relevant professionals who contribute to a holistic assessment and confirm how the child's difficulties or disability affect their learning. Plans are produced with interventions and support designed to aid them in accessing education
5. Oxfordshire received a statement of action at the time of its last Local Area Inspection in 2017 as a result of weak performance in the production of EHCPs.

Increasing demand for EHCP's in Oxfordshire

6. The combined total of children with statements of SEN and EHCPs in Oxfordshire remained around the 2,000 mark until 2015 when it started to increase year on year. This is a similar pattern to the national figures, although the growth from 2015 is more noticeable in Oxfordshire.
7. Information submitted in January 2020 for the National SEND audit confirmed 4,017 statutory Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP's) maintained by Oxfordshire County Council. This is an increase of 463 (13%) from January 2019 and is higher than the increase reported nationally (10.2%). By June 2020, the number of EHCP's had increased to 4,355.

EHCP Requests and Assessments completed in 2019

8. There were 1,023 initial requests made for an assessment for an EHCP in Oxfordshire during the 2019 calendar year, which is an increase of 32% on the previous year's figure of 777.
9. There were 621 children and young people in Oxfordshire assessed and a decision was taken whether to issue an EHCP during the 2019 calendar year. Of these, 619 (99.6%) had a new EHCP made during the 2019 calendar year. This is higher than the national figure of 94.1%.
10. Over the last five years, the number of EHCPs (aged 0-25) issued per year in Oxfordshire has trebled, from 232 to 621 (+168%). This increase has been predominantly in the primary school age group. By June 2020 there were 4,355 EHCP's, which is an increase of 614 on the position in June 2019.
11. In 2020, between January and June there were 565 requests for an EHC needs assessment. This is almost identical to the number of requests made from January to June in 2019 (564 total). By June 2019, 293 assessments had been completed. In comparison, by the end of June 2020, the SEN team had completed 420 assessments.

Types of education placement attend by children with EHCPs

12. In Oxfordshire, the largest proportion of children and young people with EHCPs receive their education in mainstream schools (both maintained and independent) – 39%. This is followed by attendance at special schools – 36.1% (this is down from 38.6% in 2019). The proportion of children and young people in special schools is slightly beneath the national average of 37.3%, and the proportion in mainstream schools in Oxfordshire is in line with the national average of 39.1%.
13. Oxfordshire has a higher proportion of children and young people with EHCPs in further education (17.5%) compared with that nationally (16.5%)
14. A higher proportion of children and young people with an EHCP are in independent provision in Oxfordshire than nationally. 3.6% of the children in mainstream Oxfordshire schools are in independent schools (2.6% nationally).

Of the 1452 Oxfordshire children in special schools, 16.1% are in independent provision compared with 10.9% nationally.

15. The SEND Sufficiency Strategy emphasises the development of provision in Oxfordshire maintained by the Local Authority to meet the increasing demand. The difference in cost of different types of provision is demonstrated below:

Type of Provision	Average cost per pupil	Range
Mainstream School (primary)	£3,500 top-up per annum	£2,174 - £7,392
Resource Base	£13,600 top up per annum	£11,508 – £15,746
Alternative Provision	£9,468 per annum	£180 - £66,932
Local Authority & Academy Special School	£17,600 per annum	£17,600 - £50,000
Independent and Non-Maintained Special School (non-residential)	£56,000 per annum	£3,179 - £56,771
INMSS (residential)	£75,700 per annum	£18,441 - £219,617

16. Three quarters of the 619 EHCPs made during 2019 in Oxfordshire were for children and young people in mainstream schools (74.8% - 463 children). This compares positively to the national rate of 68%, as well as having a lower proportion of children and young people with new EHCPs in special schools (14.7% - 91) compared with that nationally (18.7%).
17. Investing in increasing places in Oxfordshire schools reduces the need for high-cost places in independent schools, and there has been significant Capital investment to support the creation of additional places for children with SEND. An additional 169 places were created between 2011 to 2019, at a cost of £14.59m. This expansion of places at existing Oxfordshire Special Schools takes our total number of Special Schools places to 1,255, and a further 100 places scheduled to receive pupils during 2020.
18. Between October 2018 and December 2020, an additional 68 Resource Base places will have been created.

EHC Needs Assessments – Timeliness

19. The SEND code of practice states that the EHC needs assessment and plan process, from the point when an assessment is requested (or a child or young person is brought to the local authority’s attention) until the final EHCP is issued, must take no more than 20 weeks. This is a shorter time limit than the 26 weeks previously given for the completion of statements. The special education needs and disability regulations allow for exceptions to the time limits in certain cases.

20. The completion of assessments and plans in Oxfordshire has not kept pace with our statistical neighbours, regional or national averages (see Table 1).

Table 1 – New EHCP’s issued within 20 weeks (excluding exceptions)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Oxfordshire	32.8	31.0	36.7	47.3	50.4
Statistical Neighbour (average)	72.1	66.8	71.6	74.1	72.0
South East (average)	56.8	43.1	52.8	51.0	47.4
England (average)	59.2	58.6	64.9	60.1	60.4

21. Failure to meet the 20-week deadline was highlighted as an area of weakness in the 2017 Local Area SEND inspection. At the point of the revisit in October 2019, the recovery indicated progress, and Ofsted commented that “more new EHC needs assessments were being completed within the statutory timeframe than in the past.” They noted that “despite a significant increase in the number of requests for EHC needs assessments, the percentage of new EHC plans finalised within the required 20 weeks was broadly in line with the national average.”

Table 2 – New EHCP’s issued within 20 weeks (excluding exceptions)

	Apr 2020	May 2020	Jun 2020	Jul 2020	Aug 2020
Monthly Perf. (all plans)	52%	69%	69%	49%	52%
Rolling (YTD)	45%	47%	49%	49%	-
Month Perf (due in month)	64%	84%	58%	50%	-
England 2019 figure	60.4%				

Quality of Plans

22. The high volume of EHC plans being produced resulted in unmanageable caseloads in excess of 350 cases per worker. A change in the staffing structure (increasing the number of posts to manage the current cases and the increasing demand for new assessments) reduced caseloads to 200-250 per worker. While this change was necessary, it has contributed to a slow rate of improvement in this aspect of the written statement of action. This was highlighted in the 2019 SEND Local Area Revisit, and a number of actions are being implemented to improve the quality of EHC plans. These will be monitored by the Department for Education (DfE) who will have oversight of the Accelerated Progress Plan.
23. The Quality Assurance framework is being revised. This is to ensure that themes identified are addressed and targets set for team performance.

Financial and Staff Implications

24. Changes to the staffing structure in July 2019 were intended to better manage the demand for assessments and bring down caseloads. The reorganisation was completed to plan however, it had an impact on performance with fluctuations in the achievement of deadlines while staff were recruited. Teams are now stabilised, with all but three positions in the SEN Teams occupied by permanent staff.
25. Officers are working closely with schools and settings in order to develop our SEND and inclusion strategies. We are also required to produce a deficit repayment plan in partnership with stakeholders in order to address the significant financial pressures which currently exist within the Dedicated Schools Grant high needs block.
26. We must focus on reducing the demand for special school and independent and non-maintained specialist placements. This relies on partnerships between OCC and schools. We can enhance the outcomes of children through provision of early intervention and a fully inclusive curriculum.
27. There are wider budgetary implications if demand for EHCPs continues to increase and we fail to develop capacity for Oxfordshire children to receive their education within the county. It is essential that we ensure a sufficient supply of local, high quality, mainstream, special school and resource bases which deliver good outcomes for children.

Equalities Implications

28. An equalities impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the High Needs Block Recovery plan.

HAYLEY GOOD

Deputy Director for Children's Services and Education

September 2020

This page is intentionally left blank

Education Scrutiny Committee Work programme (2020)

Outlined below is the Education Scrutiny Committee’s preliminary work programme.

The programme aims to prioritise areas of scrutiny where the Committee can add most value, either by holding to account or contributing to policy development. It does this by focusing on areas of public interest, where the committee’s impact can be measured, interrogating performance information and keeping abreast of current areas of change / review.

Agenda Item	Reasons and objective for item	Lead Member / Officer
25 November 2020, 1pm		
Draft Oxfordshire Special Educational Needs Strategy	An opportunity for Education Scrutiny Committee to hear about and comment on a draft of the developing Oxfordshire SEND Strategy.	Head of SEND
3 February 2021, 1pm		
Educational Attainment in Secondary Schools – Annual report	The approach and timing of this report will need to be reviewed in the light of availability of data at this time. There is an opportunity to update on the need for addressing catch-up and the attainment gap in deprived communities.	Deputy Director Children’s Services (Education)
TO BE SCHEDULED		
RSA/Ofsted/ Education Funding Agency (tbc)	Engagement session	RSC/Ofsted/EFA representatives/Deputy Director Children’s Services (Education)
2021/22 Admission Scheme changes	School Organisation Stakeholders Group asked Education Scrutiny to look at a report on the changes approved in the 2021/22 admissions scheme.	Head of Access to Learning (Allyson Milward)
Reintegration Timetabling Update	To receive an annual report about the number of reintegration timetables being used at schools across Oxfordshire as agreed at the	Head of Learner Engagement (Deborah Bell)

ESC9

	September 2019 committee meeting.	
Future annual reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Attainment • Reintegration Timetabling • Direct Schools Grant High Needs Funding Block 	

ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS FOR PROGRAMMING		
Home to School Transport Policy	Discussion around forming a working group to input into the formulation of the policy for mainstream schools.	Cllr John Howson