

Review Topic:

Improvement for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (**SEND**) Services in Oxfordshire.

Select Committee(s):

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Relevant background

The People Overview & Scrutiny Committee resolved that a **SEND** Improvement Task and Finish Group should be established to consider where improvements are necessary in the Council's SEND services, taking account of parent group concerns in line with the conditions set out in the Written Statement of Action; to seek assurance that progress is being made against those in the short-term and that progress updates will be reported on to the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

What questions are the Group aiming to answer?

1. How is the Council improving its services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities?
2. How does the Council's performance for **SEND** Services contribute to the improvements required within the Written Statement of Action use and expect?
3. What is needed to achieve further required improvements across Oxfordshire's **SEND** services?
4. What can the Council do, despite the ongoing national picture concerns / funding issues, to improve local services?
5. How to anchor the 11 recommendations from the last People Scrutiny
6. Does the Council have practice standards for responses to enquiries and for client handovers? If so, do ICT systems support good communication flow?
7. What lessons can we learn from the top performing authorities (Hertfordshire) and how can we include them within our current offering?

Aim**That the Task and Finish Group:**

- Supports and scrutinises the required service improvements for SEND services in Oxfordshire.
- Provides Member oversight, challenge, accountability and assurance to the improvement process, and also enables Parent Carer input.
- Makes recommendations where appropriate.

Objectives

- Meet with officers to ascertain the project timelines and deadlines associated with the service improvement plans.
- Meet regularly with Officers to: assess and receive progress updates/reports on the required service improvements; to understand how **SEND** services are changing, and how these changes will improve the quality of service to children and young people and their families.
- The Group will use up-to-date strategic documents and reports to assess targets and the measure progress against those targets

- Identify themes and risks associated with the transformation of **SEND** services and take appropriate further action as necessary.
- Arrange to shadow senior SEND staff in the field to get a better understanding of their roles and the pressures they face on a day to day basis.

This could include:

providing regular findings reports to the main committee; suggesting recommendations back to the main committee to establish further areas for formal scrutiny and focussed work; or where appropriate, suggest recommendations for the main committee to escalate urgent concerns to Cabinet, or the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder.

Scope

In scope

- The delivery of SEND services transformation against the agreed Written Statement of Action
- SEND Services Performance and Monitoring

Out of scope

- Scrutiny of any individual's SEND service provisions
- SEND services budgets

Outcomes for Oxfordshire / Benefits

Oxfordshire's County Council's Corporate Strategy sets out strategic goals to improve resident wellbeing, experience and the county's economic prosperity, and give residents a Fair Deal.

This task group would support the delivery of the following corporate goals:

1. Improve outcomes for children in need of support and protection (Wellbeing)
2. Enhance opportunities for residents to influence and shape council services (Resident Experience)
3. Improve the satisfaction of families of children with special educational needs and disabilities with the support they receive. (Resident Experience)

Proposed work plan

It is important to clearly allocate who is responsible for the work, to ensure that Members and officers can plan the resources needed to support the task group.

Timescale – Introductory meeting on 30 June 2023 to receive presentations from the Cabinet Member for Children, Education, and Young People Services and from the Interim Executive Director and the Interim Corporate Director. This will enable the Group to decide on a pattern of meetings and timeframe. It is anticipated that, going forward, the Group will meet online for around 90 minutes each time approximately every two weeks once the schedule of meetings has been agreed. Meetings to be adaptive to daily time pressures and to be negotiated with the Group's Chair. Initially 6 x 90min meetings to look at:

1. Communications with parents and proposed improvements, to explore a Communication Framework approach.
2. Staff churn, retention, support, and resilience / succession planning.
3. Review of the 11 recommendations of the Parent Carers Forum (OXPCF)

4. Review of Statutory Obligations against timing and response times, reasons for delays and potential OCC improvements.
5. Review the concept of a wider engagement piece and two-way feedback from users / children / parents and the wider eco system of staff inside education, professionals and public servants.
6. Review of Ombudsman decisions to identify any themes and to review service improvements / service learning arising from those.
7. How many children are home-educated owing to a lack of tailored SEND provision in the county and, of those, how many are on EOTAS or an EOTAS referral waiting list?

Task & Finish Group Members

Cllr Nigel Simpson, chair
Cllr Trish Elphinstone
Cllr Damian Haywood
Cllr John Howson
Cllr Sally Powlotsky
Cllr Michael Waine

Potential Witnesses

Oxfordshire Parents Carers Forum
OXSend Parents
Teachers / Headteacher network / SEND specialists
Niall McWilliams – ex Oxford Academy
Director of Children Services OCC
Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education OCC
Hertfordshire County Council – Best Practice
Head teachers / deputy headteachers who have contacted members including Sutton Courtney and South Moreton Primary
Admissions and Transport Services Manager

Useful Documents

SEND Development Plan
SEND Improvement Plan
Equalities implications
SEND Documents given to People Scrutiny in the last 3 meetings (references needed)

The services within the scope of this Task and Finish Group will provide support to residents with 'protected characteristics', as defined by The Equality Act 2010, many with complex levels of need and support. The Group will be mindful of this and will monitor the equalities implications emerging from its work with officers, and will work to identify mitigation measures for those with a potentially negative impact, if applicable.