

SEND Review Action Plan

Autumn 2022 update

November 2022

Dear Parent Carer,

In response to the 2021 Lincolnshire Review, Suffolk County Council (SCC) and partners co-produced an Integrated Plan of the actions required to deliver the review's nine recommendations.

We have been working to deliver these recommendations since September 2021 and have recently reviewed our progress, finding the following:

- 23 of the actions have been actioned (though we acknowledge the impact on families will take more time to be fully felt)
- 8 of the actions remain in progress and will be completed by December 2022
- Due to a change of software provider, the actions around the implementation of a new Annual Review portal have been moved to 2023

You can read more about the actions we have taken so far on the following pages.

It is noted on each page although I would like to say it again here that where we say 'Action completed' in the following pages, we mean that the specific action we were tasked with in the Independent Review has been completed. We know, however, that the impact of these actions has not always yet been fully felt by families yet. We will continue to monitor and review these areas until they are.

We hope that you will be able to see from what follows that an enormous amount of work has already been undertaken over the last twelve months, and I would like to express my thanks to those within our Service who have worked tirelessly to bring us to this point.

We know there is still much more to do, and we remain completely committed to implementing all the recommendations of the review and ensuring that they bring about the changes for children, young people and families. For this reason, the actions that remain in progress will now be added to our Integrated SEND Strategy delivery plan. This will ensure that they remain central to our work as we move forwards.

With very best wishes,



Ros Somerville

Assistant Director, Inclusion
Suffolk County Council

Review Recommendation 1:

Identify a strategic partner to support, at pace, a review of the current case management arrangements for children and young people subject to statutory SEND processes, to make sure that there is the capacity and knowledge to ensure co-production during every stage of the EHC process.

‘Action completed’ means that the specific action listed has been completed. We are continuing to monitor the impact of these actions, as we know this has not always been felt by families yet.

Action identified in Autumn 2021	September 2022 update	For the future	What this means for families
<i>The strategic partner will begin working with us from 20th Sept 2021, with an integrated delivery plan created with parents and partners for the changes we want to make.</i>	Action completed IMPOWER were appointed as our strategic partner in September 2021 and the integrated delivery plan was created in co-production with the interim parent carer co-production group (prior to the formation of Suffolk Parent Carer Forum).	We will continue to use the learning, resources and new ways of working developed over the past year as we move forwards.	Families can trust that our plans have been co-produced with parent carers and our strategic partners before implementation.
<i>The review of our case management arrangements will start this half-term and set out clearly how we will change the capacity and knowledge to ensure co-production at every stage. Importantly, we will also aim to start to action the agreed changes this term to show impact, seeking feedback from parents and young people to ensure the changes are working.</i>	Case management: We have redesigned our assessment and placement processes, to reduce delays and increase consistency. Capacity: Analysis of our staffing levels found we did not have enough staff to make the changes needed. As a result, we have created 26 full time equivalent new posts within our Service. Some of these have already been recruited to, with more to come. Knowledge of co-production: We have trialled a new method of co-producing with families called “Signs of Inclusion”. Feedback from families and staff was positive and so this has now been rolled out across Family Services.	More schools will be involved in panels to strengthen joint working and ensure consistency across the county. We continue to recruit for additional staff and will continue to monitor the data on timeliness of statutory assessments. We recognise that the national shortage of Educational Psychologists in particular is impacting our progress in this area and will continue to urgently explore all possible avenues to address this. All existing Family Services staff have received training in the “Signs of Inclusion” model, and all new staff will receive it as part of their induction.	Families will feel confident that decisions are consistent across the county. Families will receive timely communication, with assessments and decisions from us with statutory timescales. Beginning in Autumn 2022, we will send families who have recently received a final EHC plan a link to a feedback form to let us know their experience.
<i>We will also review our SENCo advice line to ensure it is maximising the impact it can have in supporting SENCOS and implement any changes necessary</i>	Action completed Following feedback that the existing line was too part-time, we have launched an Inclusion Support Line for education setting staff that is operational Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.	We will continue to promote our support line options to schools and settings, and train the advisors in the relevant areas to maximise their effectiveness.	Schools will be more confident in how they access additional support, leading to greater consistency and fewer delays for families*.

* It may be helpful to note here that while the new Inclusion Support Line is for education setting staff, families can access the Local Offer Advisors on 0345 606 1490 between Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm.

Review Recommendation 2:

Complete a training needs analysis with Family Services officers to identify gaps in knowledge and skills; develop appropriate training to ensure that all practitioners and managers are fully conversant with process, procedure, SEND legislation and Person-Centred Planning and that practice is consistent across the county.

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Action identified in Autumn 2021	September 2022 update	For the future	What this means for families
<i>We will co-develop the model of practice for our teams, with key stakeholders through dedicated design workshops</i>	Action completed. We held design workshops to develop the strengths-based "Signs of Inclusion" model of practice and completed a successful trial with families and Family Services officers.	All existing Family Services officers have now been trained in this new model, and new recruits will also receive this training.	Families will be more involved in the production of EHC plans.
<i>We will co-create the tools required to implement the new practice model. As part of this, we will be develop and trial a clearer way of assessing needs of children with SEND, based on strengths and pilot this with our strategic partner through the Autumn term</i>	Action completed. Following feedback from staff and families, we have developed a "conversation prompt tool" to help officers and families have productive conversations around their child's needs and EHC Plan. To help schools assess children's needs, we trialled a needs assessment and provision mapping model called VSEND. The initial trial was positive and this is now being offered to all schools from Autumn 22.	We will ensure that new staff joining are also trained in these prompts, to ensure all families benefit. We will promote VSEND to all schools through our newsletters, our SENCO forums, our school roadshows and in-person visits.	Families will be more included in the production of EHC plans and will feel heard by us. Schools will be more aware of what provision is possible, leading to quicker, more flexible support for children.
<i>We will complete a training and skills analysis that identifies gaps in knowledge around SEND legislation and guidance as well as confidence levels in having strength based discussions with families and partners</i>	Action ongoing. We have completed our skills analysis exercise and from this, worked with our Workforce Development department to put together a new SEND Training Programme for staff.	The new training programme is being rolled out across the whole Service from Autumn 22. Line Managers will monitor staff training and this will also be embedded in annual performance and development reviews.	Families will have confidence that our staff understand SEND legislation and guidance, and will feel supported and included in discussions.
<i>Refreshed training on SEND procedures for appropriate staff will commence this term</i>	Action completed. Two whole-service training sessions were delivered in late 2021 and early 2022 on SEND and the Law and Decision making panels for SEND; Understanding the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015.	As above, training will continue to be delivered to both new and existing staff and monitor via line managers.	Families will have confidence that our staff understand SEND legislation and guidance.

Review Recommendation 3:

Critically analyse current operational practice against the SEND Code of Practice and primary legislation (Children and Families Act 2014) to ensure the integrity of the local authority's compliance with statutory duties.

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Action identified in Autumn 2021	September 2022 update	For the future	What this means for families
<i>Collation and (external) review of policy and process documentation, against SEND Code of Practice and primary legislation</i>	<p>Action ongoing. We have externally reviewed all our policies and processes.</p> <p>We have reviewed and updated the information about our decision making panels on the Local Offer website.</p> <p>Training on legal compliance, SEND decision making and the law has been delivered to staff.</p> <p>Family Services now have easier access to legal advice to ensure statutory duties are understood by all.</p>	<p>We are continuing to review our letter templates and web content to ensure their quality and compliance.</p> <p>We will review our training on writing an EHC Plan and update this if needed.</p> <p>Our SEND Legal training will continue to be delivered to all SEND staff. Family Services staff also have access to our Legal team as required.</p>	Families will have confidence that the advice we give is accurate, up to date and complies with SEND law.
<i>(External) observation of operations in practice</i>	<p>Action completed. We are inviting a wider range of schools to join our panels, and have also developed and delivered training for our partners in Health and Social Care on panel attendance and SEND law.</p>	We will continue to offer training in Panel attendance and SEND Law to our partners in Health and Social Care	Families will have confidence that the evidence submitted to our panels and the decisions made are robust and legally compliant.
<i>Agreement of improvements and actions identified with parents and stakeholders</i>	<p>Action completed. We continue to work with families and stakeholders to identify improvements and actions needed on an ongoing basis.</p>	We commit to continuing and deepening our joint working with families and stakeholders in the future.	Families will feel that their voice is heard and confident that they will see changes as a result of their feedback.
<i>Incorporation of the actions into the training and practice development programme so they are coherent</i>	<p>Action completed. We have worked with our Workforce Development department to put together a new SEND Training Programme for staff that incorporates the review's recommendations.</p>	Training will continue to be delivered to both new and existing staff and monitor via line managers.	Families will have confidence that our staff understand and comply with SEND legislation and guidance.

Review Recommendation 4:

Senior leaders to check with the CCGs the effectiveness of the local protocol for the effective sharing of information which addresses confidentiality, consent and security of information.

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<i>We will review our local information sharing protocols to ensure we have clear and robust processes in place that can be articulated and understood by staff across the SEND system</i>	<p>Action completed. We have completed two Data Protection Impact Assessments with Health colleagues so far.</p> <p>We have created a secure shared area for children's files on Microsoft SharePoint which all partners (once granted permission) can access for panel preparations and decision making.</p>	We will continue to monitor and develop our data sharing agreements with stakeholders in line with future needs.	Families will have confidence that their personal data will be kept secure, whilst greater information sharing will lead to greater efficiency and less delay.
<i>These will form part of the integrated learning and development programme we will develop (which will include increasing the understanding of the SEND Code of Practice and applying strength based approaches in practice)</i>	<p>Action completed. We have delivered data protection and Information Sharing training to staff</p>	This training will form part of our ongoing SEND training programme.	Families will have confidence that their personal data will be treated securely and appropriately.
<i>We will meet with our data management team to review current systems to ensure they enable smooth, safe and compliant data sharing – and take actions to overcome any challenges that may exist in our current systems</i>	<p>Action completed. This work formed part of the Data Protection Impact Assessments referenced above.</p>	We will continue to monitor and develop our data sharing agreements with stakeholders in line with future needs.	Families will have confidence that their personal data will be kept secure, whilst greater information sharing will lead to greater efficiency and less delay.
<i>Our quality assurance processes will include a specific lens of information sharing, so as we review our interactions with partner organisations and parents and carers including assessments, plans and reviews, we will assess the effectiveness of information sharing and share the outcomes of this</i>	<p>Action completed. Our Quality Assurance board is now multi-agency, with representation from Education, Health and Social Care colleagues.</p>	This board will continue to meet on an ongoing basis.	Our joint work will enable us to support families in a more consistent, joined-up way.

Review Recommendation 5:

Establish a robust means of tracking and reporting on all Annual Reviews; develop appropriate processes that support proactive engagement with settings to ensure both that Annual Reviews are held and paperwork is submitted to the local authority within timescales.

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<i>We will track the completion of Annual reviews for all children and young people with EHCPs.</i>	Action ongoing. We are now tracking the completion of Annual Review for all CYP with EHCPs, but still aren't completing enough Annual Reviews within Statutory Timeframes.	We have taken steps to improve this, such as: Recruiting 12 additional staff to monitor and process Annual Reviews Designing modules within our Liquid Logic system to help us more efficiently track and process Annual Reviews	Families will receive timely responses from us following each Annual Review.
<i>We are currently trialling a new 'Annual Review Portal' which will help ensure all schools know which reviews are due and when. The portal will allow safe submission of paperwork and the Local Authority to monitor and report on timescales. The trial will take place through the Autumn term to be fully rolled out through 2022.</i>	Action changed. The 'Annual Review Portal' trial has been completed and learning from this has been captured. During this same time period, the decision was made to move our case management to a different software platform called Liquid Logic. Within this system, all information will be in a secure online portal which families will be able to log into and view. This system will also be able to handle Annual Review processing for us and so the decision has been taken not to progress the AR portal. We are working to implement the new system by April 2023. There is a parent carer testing session to test and give feedback on the new system on 18 November 2022; to book onto this please email info@suffolkpcf.co.uk		
<i>In the Autumn term, we will ensure 'annual reviews' is a key agenda at our SENDCo networks, alongside other improvement priorities, including the new approach to understanding and measuring children's needs that we will be trialling</i>	Action completed. Inclusion staff will attend SENCO forums each term to deliver annual review training and guidance	We have sent updated guidance to all schools about annual reviews and have published a reference calendar on the SENCO pages of the Local Offer website. Printed copies of this have also been mailed to every school.	Schools will be clear about how to hold an Annual Review and involve families at each stage.

Review Recommendation 6:

Establish a mechanism to ensure that all Phase Transfers are identified; actively tracked and completed within the relevant legal timescales for both children of statutory school age and Post-16 learners

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<i>As a subset of the actions in the section above regarding tracking Annual Reviews, we will complete a full check and validation of the list of children and young people who require a review of their EHC plans in preparation for Phase Transfer</i>	Action completed. We have created a specific reporting mechanism for this through our current system Capita One. This is reported on weekly basis and will be taken over by Liquid Logic when we transfer.	This will continue each term.	We will together begin planning for Phase Transfers much earlier.
<i>We will ensure this list is distributed to all headteachers and principals of schools, colleges and other institutions attended by children or young people with EHC plans</i>	Action completed. Communication has been sent out to schools at the start of term	This will continue each term.	We will together begin planning for Phase Transfers much earlier.
<i>We will ensure effective communication with those headteachers and principals who have children where transfers are due to take place, through Specialist Education Staff, to confirm the lists and timescales for the submission of the Annual Review paperwork</i>	Action completed. Communication has been sent out to schools at the start of term	This will continue each term.	We will together begin planning for Phase Transfers much earlier.
<i>Advance communication with all parents / carers of children with plans requiring Phase Transfer, and scheduling of transition planning meetings for Spring and Summer Terms for those moving to year 7 in mainstream</i>	Action completed. This is picked up annually as part of the annual process.	LA staff will meet with SENCOs in the Autumn term each year to check how Y7 children with EHCPs are settling in.	We will together begin planning for Phase Transfers much earlier.
<i>We will provide additional Business Support resource to support administrative processing and to monitor progression.</i>	Action completed. During the Autumn Term 2021 and the Spring Term 2022 additional capacity was recruited from across SCC to support this work.	12 more temporary Business Support Officers have been resourced to support with this.	Annual Reviews will be processed in a timely fashion.

Review Recommendation 7:

Review the process for securing specialist placements; use co-production as an opportunity to work with families to explore options for provision that will best support their young person and consider a case work approach to consultation.

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<i>Working with parents to review the proposed new approach and how we best use this to support children and families in Suffolk</i>	<p>Action completed. We have redesigned our specialist placement processes, to reduce delays and increase consistency.</p> <p>Working with IMPOWER and SCC colleagues we have developed a “Suffolk Inclusion Toolkit” for schools, containing resources to support them in assessing needs, mapping provision and getting additional support where required. This includes a new resources called VSEND, which has received positive feedback during it’s initial trial.</p>	The new Inclusion Toolkit will be promoted to schools throughout the year via newsletters, direct mail, webpages and forums.	Schools will have a clearer understanding of how to identify children’s needs and what provision can be put in place to meet them.
<i>Use the approach to develop a more rounded picture of children’s needs and with our specialist provision to help understand the provision’s ability to meet these, to ensure appropriate matching of provision and needs</i>	<p>Action completed. The new Suffolk Inclusion Toolkit will form a key part of our panel process and preparation, so that panels get the right information to enable robust decisions to be made first time, reducing delay.</p>	The new Inclusion Toolkit will be promoted to schools throughout the year.	If a request for specialist placement is received, our panel will have the right information first time to be able to consider this, which will reduce the amount of time families have to wait for decisions.
<i>Ensure families are part of this analysis – developing a shared view on what the child / young person’s needs are and how they are best met</i>	<p>Action completed. VSEND ensures that families are included in discussions around needs and provision from the outset.</p>	We will continue to use VSEND across the county, offering it to all our schools.	Families will be included in the discussions about how children / young people’s needs will be met.
<i>Developing a plan for how we roll this approach out further to mainstream it in practice across Suffolk, including through the revised Decision Making Panels</i>	<p>Action ongoing. VSEND is now offered to all schools, and this is being advertised through all our regular school communication channels. VSEND paperwork is now also requested as part of each request that comes to our specialist placement panels.</p>	We will continue to embed this in our day to day practice.	Families views about children / young people’s needs and provision will be at the centre of our discussions and decision making.

Review Recommendation 8:

Work with education leaders and parent carers to understand the increasing demand for specialist provision and use both SEND data and local intelligence and demographics to inform sufficiency planning.

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Action identified in Autumn 2021	September 2022 update	For the future	What this means for families
<i>Meet with partners across the system to listen to concerns and ideas for change.</i>	<p>Action completed.</p> <p>The Assistant Director, Inclusion has met with different groups of Headteachers and CEOs</p> <p>Senior Leaders have undertaken ‘Time to Listen’ events with parents Attended to feedback from SENDIASS and SPCF SCC staff have attended SPCF Roadshows</p>	<p>Termly opportunities for Heads to meet to update on SEND developments and provide an opportunity to better understand the system and how schools and SCC can meet the needs of children and young people in Suffolk with SEND</p> <p>Monthly meetings with SPCF</p>	<p>Families will have opportunities to tell their lived experience to staff who will listen and ensure that where things have not worked, our plans to improve will address the challenges raised.</p>
<p><i>Using the data from the trial to pinpoint the nature and extent of needs which go unmet, across different localities and settings.</i></p> <p><i>Aggregating the data on needs from the trial to evidence where provision is insufficient.</i></p> <p><i>Developing new sufficiency actions based on this evidence.</i></p>	<p>Action ongoing:</p> <p>The data from the VSEND trial was positive, but was not large scale enough to give us the information we need to plan for future needs (“sufficiency planning”).</p> <p>Action completed:</p> <p>Our SEND Sufficiency Plan has been updated in 2022. We used the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Census Data • iHub data on emerging needs and trends; • Statistical Neighbour benchmarking (looking at areas that are statistically similar to Suffolk) 	<p>The 2022 SEND Sufficiency Plan is awaiting sign off by Cabinet in Autumn 2022.</p> <p>Future versions of our Sufficiency Plan will additionally be informed by data from the Suffolk Inclusion Toolkit (inc. VSEND).</p>	<p>We will be better able to see what needs are emerging much earlier and plan specialist placements to meet those needs.</p> <p>This should mean that children do not have to wait as long for the right placement.</p>

Review Recommendation 9:

Use the outcomes of complaints, mediations and Tribunals, as well as LGSCO decisions, to critically analyse processes and decision-making and identify learning to inform future practice for all practitioners involved in the SEND processes.

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<i>Desktop analysis of complaints, mediations and Tribunals, as well as LGO decisions to identify the common drivers (themes)</i>	Action completed. We have developed a new Compliments, Comments and Complaints(CCC) Dashboard to help us track, analyse and report on these issues. We reported the initial findings from this in September 2022 to our Scrutiny Committee.	We will continue to monitor and analyse this and use the data for future actions, training needs, service developments etc.	Families will have greater faith that their feedback is heard by us and that in addition to addressing issues promptly, we will also use this to improve services in the future.
<i>Two workshops, including parents / carers, to review themes and identify and immediate changes that could reduce these challenges</i>	Action completed. Two workshops with our interim co-production group of parents were completed as part of the development of the Integrated Plan in late 2021/ early 2022.	We continue to meet our new Parent Carer Forum on a monthly basis to look at themes and identify areas for future work.	Families’ views will be heard and issues will be addressed more quickly.
<i>Ensure lessons from this analysis of themes is brought into the development of the practice model for our case management teams</i>	Action ongoing. Senior Managers share important updates and learning from LGSCOs and other outcomes with staff. More detailed information is being shared with parents following complaints. Young people with SEND devised some ‘Ideal worker’ criteria – the attributes they feel someone working with young people with SEND should have. This has been promoted to staff and included in job adverts where appropriate. Guidance for phased transfers – person centred approaches has been shared to support family services when sharing news about placement decisions with families We have trialled some ‘Way Forward Meetings’ following a decision not to undertake a statutory assessment, to support schools and families in finding strategies to move forwards.	These staff briefing emails will continue going forwards. We continue to aim for greater transparency in all our communications with families. The ideal worker criteria continue to be promoted to staff on a regular basis. More ‘Way Forward’ meetings are planned for Autumn 2022.	Families will have greater faith that feedback is properly heard by us and that in addition to addressing any issues promptly, we will also use this feedback to improve services for families in the future. The Whole School Inclusion team that was trialled in summer term 22 is continuing in autumn 22.