

Report of: The Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board

Report to: Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 21st March 2024

Subject: Progress of the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board

Are specific geographical areas affected?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of area(s):		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Is the decision eligible for call-In?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:		

Summary of main issues

This is the first report to the Health and Wellbeing Board of the newly re-established Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board.

The Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board brings together local partners with a shared aim: to improve the experiences and outcomes of our children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and/or with inclusion needs that may require alternative provision (AP¹), and their families.

The Board governs the co-production and delivery of a multi-agency SEND and Inclusion strategy for the city, [Everyone's Included 2022-27](#).

This aligns with recent national policy set out in the 2023 [national SEND and AP improvement plan](#). The effectiveness of the local authority and local integrated care board in establishing a robust SEND and AP Partnership Board, with effective governance of a shared SEND and inclusion strategy, will be scrutinised in [Ofsted and CQC joint area](#)

¹ Alternative provision (AP) is education provided for children and young people who may not access mainstream education due to: exclusion from school; medical needs; a need for support with behaviour as a result of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs; or any other reason that means they cannot attend typical mainstream school. This is typically a short-term need, with the intention that the learner will return to mainstream education (as opposed to a long-term need for specialist learning provision).

[inspections of SEND services](#) under a revised inspection framework published in 2023. Leeds expects to be inspected in 2024.

The re-establishment of the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board (formerly the Leeds SEND Partnership Board) was discussed at the July 2023 meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was agreed that:

- The Health and Wellbeing Board will provide ongoing, high-level oversight of the re-established Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board and its governance of SEND and Inclusion strategy and plans; and
- Officers of the local authority and integrated care board would complete work to refine new terms of reference, membership, and structural arrangements for the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board, in line with national policy and best practice.

This report provides updates on progress on the agreed actions as above, and on:

- Recent work to implement our current local SEND and inclusion strategy, *Everyone's Included 2022-27*. Aspects of this work are informed by our recent participation in the national SEND and AP change programme.
- Plans for robust self-evaluation of our current local offer of SEND services, our policies and practices, and outcomes for our children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs. Rigorous self-evaluation is critical to inform a robust local strategy, and will be scrutinised in Ofsted and CQC area SEND inspections
- Plans for revising and refreshing our current local SEND and Inclusion strategy and arrangements for its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Local strategy and its impact will be scrutinised in Ofsted and CQC area SEND inspections
- Plans to ensure effective communication mechanisms to ensure ongoing, meaningful 2-way dialogue with stakeholders, enabling their voices to influence self-evaluation and strategic planning.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board:

- Agree the proposed revisions to the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board's terms of reference, including new operational structures and thematic priority areas
- Note updates on recent progress in key areas relating to our current *Everyone's Included 2022-27* Leeds SEND and Inclusion strategy
- Note updates on planned work to ensure rigorous local self-evaluation which will inform revision and refresh of our local SEND and inclusion strategy
- Encourage the ongoing engagement of key partners across education, health, and social care services in the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board and planned activity as above

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report aims to:

- Provide an update on progress to re-establish the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board, as agreed at the July 2023 meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board, to:
 - Ensure alignment with the national SEND and AP improvement plan 2023
 - Ensure robust terms of reference and engagement of stakeholders; and
 - Ensure effective governance of our shared, multi-agency SEND and Inclusion strategy for Leeds, [Everyone's Included 2022-27](#)
- Provide updates on key recent work to implement the *Everyone's Included 2022-27* strategy. This has been informed by Leeds' participation in the national SEND and AP change programme with the West Yorkshire Change Programme Partnership
- Provide an overview of planned future activity of the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board, including: rigorous self-evaluation of our current SEND and inclusion offer and its impact; revision of our local SEND and inclusion strategy, informed by self-evaluation; and review of communication mechanisms to ensure meaningful dialogue with stakeholders
- Seek the support of members of the Health and Wellbeing Board in engaging partners and stakeholders in contributions to planned activities, at pace.

2. Background information

The Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board brings together local partners with a shared aim: to improve the experiences and outcomes of Leeds children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND and inclusion needs, and their families.

For some partners in learning, health, and social care agencies, engagement in the Board reflects statutory responsibilities. Other partners, including those representing families, have an interest as stakeholders.

The need to establish local area SEND and AP Partnership Boards was set out in the 2023 national SEND and AP Improvement Plan. The Plan describes multi-agency boards with governance of a single, shared SEND and inclusion strategic plan (in Leeds, our *Everyone's Included 2022-27* strategy).

The functions of a local SEND and AP Partnership Board, and its effective governance of a local SEND and inclusion strategy, will be scrutinised in [Ofsted and CQC joint area inspections of SEND services](#) under a revised inspection framework published in 2023. Leeds expects to be inspected in 2024.

Leeds already had an established SEND Partnership Board at the time of publication of the national Improvement Plan. However, it was recognised that the

Board as was lacked robustness. This included a lack of representation of some key stakeholders, and a lack of higher-level oversight.

This was discussed at the July 2023 meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board and it was agreed that:

- The Health and Wellbeing Board will provide ongoing oversight of the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board, and its governance of a shared local SEND and inclusion strategy; and
- Lead officers across the local authority and integrated care board would work to ensure robust terms of reference and appropriate multi-agency membership of the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board, in line with national policy and best practice

In autumn 2023 a [national change programme for SEND and AP](#) was introduced. This programme is intended to enable local areas to test new approaches in line with the national vision for SEND and AP. Leeds is participating in this programme as a member of the West Yorkshire Change Programme Partnership.

2 Main issues

2.1 Update on the on re-establishment of the area SEND and AP Partnership Board:

Officers of the local authority and integrated care board have recently met as a 'tactical group'; an adjunct to the full Board, this group has allowed for operational planning between full Board meetings.

The group has completed revisions to the draft Terms of Reference for the Board (please see Appendix 1). Revisions reflect input from members of the Board.

Revisions also include proposed new arrangements for operational delivery of the local SEND and inclusion strategy governed by Board. New themed work groups aligning with local and national priorities are proposed as follows:

- Joint commissioning and sufficiency
- Voice, influence, and change (VIC) and transparency
- Neurodivergence and Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH)
- Practice, workforce, and training
- Performance, data, and quality assurance

Cross-cutting themes for all work groups are proposed as follows:

- Preparation for adulthood
- Communication

Work groups will be co-chaired by partners across the local authority and integrated care board, to ensure shared ownership of the agenda. Once groups are established, the 'tactical group' will no longer be required and will stand down.

Accelerated Progress Plans (APPs) to focus on urgent change in key areas of vulnerability may also be considered.

2.2 **Update on recent progress to implement our local *Everyone's Included 2022-27* strategy:**

- Co-production of the Leeds SEND and Inclusion Practice Framework to promote early identification, assessment, and support plans:

The developing Practice Framework seeks to enable best inclusive practice in our Leeds schools and settings, with a focus on early identification and quality, holistic early assessment and planning. It aims to bring together learning, advice, and practical tools to enable practitioners in delivering a quality, consistent graduated approach to meeting needs, in line with the national Code of Practice and in the context of wider local early help services.

The Framework is being co-produced with practitioners in Leeds schools and settings. Feedback from practitioners involved in the early stages of co-production has been positive.

The Framework will be reinforced by new 'SEND navigators' in Leeds Early Help Hubs providing additional area-based expert advice to practitioners.

- Development of the local offer for social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs (this is specifically supported by the [Future in Mind: Leeds 2021-26](#) strategy which sits alongside and integrates with the *Everyone's Included 2022-27 strategy*):

Details of our evolving local offer for SEMH may be found on our Mindmate website [here](#). Recent progress includes delivery of training to enable practitioners in schools to support SEMH needs; this has been accessed by over 100 local schools to date (31% of all Leeds schools). Progress has also been made to establish three new Mindmate support teams (with a fourth in progress), which will provide area based SEMH expertise and support to practitioners across the city.

- Development of integrated local practices to support neurodivergent children and young people:

The Leeds Partnership has a shared aspiration to re-imagine and re-model our offer for children and young people who are neurodivergent. This responds to a significant increase in demand for assessment and diagnosis of autism and ADHD, and increased waiting times, in recent years. Families too often report lack of support while awaiting assessment, leading to difficulties becoming

entrenched and significant stress. These challenges are apparent nationally as well as locally.

We intend to plan a multiagency summit to consider new model. We would intend that this new model would emphasise early identification, assessment, and planning to meet needs of children and young people - irrespective of formal diagnosis of autism or ADHD. A sensitive and engaged approach must be taken to assess this way forwards, cognisant of families who express concerns that a reduction in the diagnostic offer may result in a withdrawal of support or inability to access services and benefits, and have implications for the transition into adulthood. Engagement of children and families in this work as well as education, care, and health, is absolutely crucial.

Leeds partners are currently piloting new approaches which may inform this vision. Recent pilot activity has sought to test 'whole-school' approaches to learning and development and have received positive feedback. A new 'profiling tool' to support needs assessment is being trialled. A recent conference was attended by 200 local practitioners and was well-received. Pilot activities continue and learning from them will be reported.

A new Neurodiversity Information Hub has also been established to provide expert information, advice, and guidance to practitioners across the city to bolster support whilst improvement work continues.

- Embedding trauma-informed practice across the city:

The Leeds partnership is a [core member of the West Yorkshire Adversity, Trauma and Resilience programme](#) and continues work across agencies to embed trauma-informed practice in the city.

Trauma-informed practice is highly relevant to our children and young people with SEND, given the co-incidence of SEND needs and adverse childhood experiences; around 50% of our looked after children in Leeds, and 40% of our children in need, have identified SEND.

The Compassionate Leeds Trauma Awareness, Prevention, and Response steering group has recently been established, representing agencies across the partnership. A service specification for a new Trauma-Informed Practice Integrated Resource Team has been produced; recruitment of education and social care leads to this team is underway and will ensure an integrated approach to practice development. Work also continues to raise awareness of the programme, promote learning and development opportunities, and identify local best practice across the city to build upon.

- Supporting school attendance and reducing extended school non-attendance (ESNA):

School attendance continues to be profoundly impacted by the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic. Learners with SEND are over-represented amongst those with low attendance. A working party has been established in response to this; developments include delivery of free training for schools, enabling their

development of inclusive systems and practice to promote attendance. To date, 74 schools (22.6% of our total number of schools) have accessed this training.

- Testing new approaches to Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments and plans:

As part of our participation in the national SEND and AP change programme, Leeds partners are testing proposed new approaches to ensure high-quality, timely EHC needs assessment and plans. Learning from this local testing will inform local practice and processes, and ultimately inform a new national standardised system for EHC needs assessment and planning.

This work includes testing a proposed standardised national template for EHC Plans; testing revised arrangements for multi-agency panels responsible for reviewing requests for EHC needs assessment; and testing new approaches to mediation where a family is dissatisfied with outcomes of EHC needs assessment and planning.

- Reviewing local arrangements for alternative provision (AP)

As part of our participation in the national SEND and AP change programme, Leeds partners have commenced a review of our local arrangements for AP.

The programme encourages include analysis of 3 'tiers' of support including: targeted support in mainstream schools to promote inclusion and reduce the need for AP; quality time-limited placements in AP which rapidly identify and meet the learner's needs and enable a swift return to their mainstream school; and transitional arrangements for learners where a return to their mainstream school is not possible and they need support to access to a new school or post-16 learning setting.

2.3 **Update on planned activity for the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board:**

- Partners will work at pace to complete robust self-evaluation of our current local offer of SEND services, our policies and practices, and outcomes for our children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs.

Rigorous self-evaluation is critical to inform local strategy and development plans and will be scrutinised in Ofsted and CQC area SEND inspections; Leeds expects to be inspected in 2024.

A multi-agency working group will meet twice a month to accelerate progress of this self-evaluation and ensure representation of the voices of all partners, including families and practitioners. Shared ownership of our narrative for SEND and inclusion in Leeds is vital and members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to encourage engagement of teams or services if requested.

- A robust self-evaluation as above will support revision of our local SEND and Inclusion strategy, *Everyone's Included 2022-27*, ensuring it represents recent developments both nationally and locally. This strategy will be a key focus in Ofsted and CQC inspections and we aim to work at pace to refresh it.

This will be supported by our ongoing participation in the national SEND and AP change programme, which includes best practice sharing to inform local strategic plans for SEND and inclusion.

Arrangements for implementation of the strategy at an operational level will also be revised. Proposed New themed work groups are described at 3.1

- Partners will work together to review our current communication mechanisms and ensure we maximise opportunities for meaningful 2-way dialogue with stakeholders and enable their voices to influence local change. Examples of current mechanisms in practice to support the voice and influence of children and young people with SEND and their families may be found [here](#)

3 Health and Wellbeing Board governance

3.1 Consultation, engagement, and hearing citizen voice

3.1.1 Enabling the voices of children and young people with SEND and their families to influence change at strategic and operational levels is critical to our work. We describe our current mechanisms for this, including our local SEND Youth Council and Parent Carer Forum, in detail [here](#)

3.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

3.2.1 It is well-established that outcomes for children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs are less positive than those of their peers. Children and young people with SEND are over-represented amongst those not progressing in education or employment; those permanently excluded from school; and those in youth custody. The Leeds area SEND and Partnership Board and its effective governance of our local SEND and inclusion strategy directly responds to these inequalities and actively promotes support for children and young people to fulfil their potential in learning, enjoy the best possible health and wellbeing, participate fully in their local communities, and prepare for adulthood.

3.3 Resources and value for money

3.3.1 In common with many other local areas, services for children and young people with SEND are experiencing significant funding pressures. New funding for schools and for local authorities [was announced](#) as part of the national SEND improvement plan in 2023; however analysis by various national bodies indicates that it is unlikely this will not be adequate to meet increasing needs for support. Work to review our local SEND and inclusion strategy will include consideration of these challenges and will continue to focus on meeting needs at the earliest possible time, avoiding escalation of needs which may then require input from costly specialist services with limited capacity.

3.4 Legal Implications, access to information and call In

3.4.1 Not applicable at the present time.

3.5 Risk management

- 3.5.1 As described in point 2, there is a risk that our lack of a current and rigorous local self-evaluation and a current and robust local strategic plan for SEND and inclusion may undermine our performance in Ofsted and CQC inspection. Work at pace to address this is planned as described.
- 3.5.2 Specific risks identified through our local self-evaluation will be managed through a shared risk register already in place and reviewed regularly by the area SEND and AP Partnership Board and individual agencies.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 A robust local area SEND and AP Partnership Board, with appropriate engagement of key stakeholders and an effective structure for governing our local SEND and inclusion strategy, is critical to improve outcomes for our children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs. Effective local establishment of Boards will also be subject to scrutiny in Ofsted and CQC inspections. Work to finalise new arrangements for the Board must proceed at pace.
- 4.2 A robust and rigorous local self-evaluation must also be co-produced at pace, to ensure our developing SEND and inclusion strategy is informed by quality data and information, and by the voices of stakeholders. Self-evaluation will also be subject to scrutiny in Ofsted and CQC inspection. Work to complete self-evaluation must proceed at pace.
- 4.3 Review and refresh of our local multi-agency SEND and inclusion strategy, and new arrangements for its implementation, is critical to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs. Our local strategy will also be subject to scrutiny in Ofsted and CQC inspections. Work to revise our local strategy, informed by our self-evaluation, must proceed at pace.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board:

- Agree the proposed revisions to the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board's terms of reference, including new operational structures and thematic priority areas.
- Note updates on recent progress in key areas relating to our current *Everyone's Included 2022-27* Leeds SEND and Inclusion strategy.
- Note updates on planned work to ensure rigorous local self-evaluation which will inform revision and refresh of our local SEND and inclusion strategy.
- Encourage the ongoing engagement of key partners across education, health, and social care services in the Leeds area SEND and AP Partnership Board and planned activity as above.

7. Background documents

- Appendix 1: Revised draft Terms of Reference for the Board
- Our current Leeds SEND and Inclusion strategy, *Everyone's Included 2022-27*, is available [here](#) (and in plain text format, [here](#))
- Our Future in Mind: Leeds strategy for supporting children and young people's social, emotional and mental health is available [here](#)

THIS PAGE IS LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Implementing the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy

How does this help reduce health inequalities in Leeds?

It is well-established that outcomes for children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs are less positive than those of their peers. Children and young people with SEND are over-represented amongst those not progressing in education or employment; those permanently excluded from school; and those in youth custody.

The Leeds area SEND and Partnership Board and its effective governance of our local SEND and inclusion strategy directly responds to these inequalities and actively promotes support for children and young people to fulfil their potential in learning, enjoy the best possible health and wellbeing, participate fully in their local communities, and prepare for adulthood.

How does this help create a high-quality health and care system?

Our local SEND and Inclusion strategy will drive improvements in local inclusive practice and in our local offer of support for children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs across education, health, and care services.

How does this help to have a financially sustainable health and care system?

In common with many other local areas, services in Leeds SEND are experiencing significant funding pressures. New funding for schools and for local authorities [was announced](#) as part of the national SEND improvement plan in 2023; however analysis by various national bodies indicates that it is unlikely this will not be adequate to meet increasing needs for support.

Work to review our local SEND and inclusion strategy will include consideration of these challenges and will continue to focus on meeting needs at the earliest possible time, avoiding escalation of needs which may then require input from costly specialist services with limited capacity.

Future challenges or opportunities

Key challenges include:

- Significant, ongoing increase in local need and demand for services
- Challenges in recruiting and retaining some key practitioners (for example the national shortage of Educational Psychologists)
- Financial challenges as resource has not increased in line with demand; this has impacted profoundly on capacity in services
- Lack of appropriate school estate for developing new learning provision
- Increased concerns and complaints reported by families experiencing delays in assessment of needs and access to support services

Leeds' participation in the national SEND and AP improvement programme provides opportunities to 'test' new approaches to more timely, efficient practices which also improve quality; for example, new approaches to standardised EHC planning processes.