

Parent, Carer and Family Support Groups

Children and Families
PO Box 837
Leeds
LS1 9PZ

6th May 2024

Hello,

I am contacting to provide an initial update on the wider SEND transformation and change work we are aiming to implement over the next few months.

We have undertaken a comprehensive review of the service we provide to Children and Families and also how effectively we work with our colleagues across the learning network and in health. I would like to thank all those who were involved in providing their time and details of lived experience to inform the review. We embarked on this programme of change due to the significant rise in Education, Health and Care needs assessment requests in 2021, which coincided with some considerable workforce challenges. Following years of strong statutory compliance, we recognise that there has been a sharp drop in performance which has impacted directly on children and young people, their families and everyone that provides support assistance.

The review included a wide range of stakeholder engagement which highlighted areas for improvement in relation to our communications, our processes, the support we provide and consistency in our approaches.

Our vision is to ensure that Children and Young People in Leeds with SEND have the best possible start to life, have equal opportunities to learn, feel valued as part of society and go on to have successful lives in adulthood. A key part of successful delivery of the programme will be the way in which we work with parents and carers, schools and settings and all our partners. We want to build stronger, more open and supportive relationships with parents and carers that enable us to improve the way we meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Over the following months, we will make short term investment to clear our assessment backlog, whilst at the same time working to deliver sustainable change to prevent the backlog reoccurring in the future. We aim provide a cohesive SEND service, by aligning teams who are better equipped to respond to the level of need and the demand being placed on the service, whilst we also streamline our processes.

We will be looking to improve the use of technology within the service to facilitate better management of caseloads and to enable us to maximise the resources we have to improve our performance. We are also aiming to channel our resources into working directly with families and the learning network to identify, assess, and meet need at the right times in the right way.

We will make improvements to our communications, including our web pages and local offer, to ensure there is a consistent level of understanding of the support available.

I will be engaging with Support Groups and the Parent Carer Forum to provide further detail on our planned activities, which will also provide opportunity for reflection, feedback and discussion. I will also keep you updated on progress through regular written communications.

Earlier last week I contacted schools and settings regarding the approach for new applications. Previous feedback from settings, and parents and carers, made it clear that there is a need to change our approach to the identification, assessment, and funding of high needs support and reduce the complex administrative burden on everyone, therefore we will establish a single application process and funding will be granted as part of this approach. This will ensure that children and young people presenting with new support needs will have an EHC needs assessment, and therefore a separate Funding for Inclusion application will not be required.

It is important to highlight that we remain committed to the original premise of Funding for Inclusion, and where it is deemed that an EHCP is not required, in cases in backlog or where urgent support is required, the ability to provide funding as a preventative or emergency option will remain, which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. No pupil who has already been assessed for funding and in receipt of support will have this withdrawn as a result. In the longer term we will continue to review the needs of children in receipt of FFI without a plan, which will include greater focus on the requirement for an EHC assessment and potentially a plan, with the associated funding. This is in addition to the EHCP review process for those Children and Young People with an existing plan.

I very much look forward to discussing our plans for improvement with you further in the very near future. If you have any questions or concerns in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me at the following email address: ehcpreview@leeds.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Dan Barton', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dan Barton
Deputy Director (Learning)
Children & Families, Leeds City Council