

Torbay WSOA Review – 27 September 2023

Note of Standard WSoA Review Meeting (all WSOA areas other than joint commissioning)

Local Area:	Torbay
Date:	27 th September 2023 (pm)
Venue:	Tor Hill House, Torquay
Present	
Salam Katbi	Head of Regional VCU (DfE)
Heather Campbell	DfE Regional Lead for SEND Improvement
Emma Brown	DfE Case Lead
Keith Thompson	SEND South West Professional Adviser (DfE)
Mark Tucker	SEND Adviser (NHSE) for the South West
Anne-Marie Bond	Chief Executive, Torbay
Gemma Blackmore	NHSE SEND Manager
Nancy Meehan	Director of Children’s Services
Rachael Williams	Divisional Director for Education, Learning and Skills
Hannah Pugliese,	Head of Women & Children’s Commissioning
Hannah Spencer	Senior SEND Officer, Torbay
Hannah Baker	SEND Project Manager WSoA, Torbay Council
Liz Davenport	Chief Executive, Torbay and South Devon NHS trust (Virtual)
Su Smart	Deputy Director of Commissioning, NHS Devon
Lincoln Sargeant	Director of Public Health (Interim chair of SEND strategic board)
Deep Dive Initial Feedback	
<p>SK welcomed and thanked everyone for their participation in the deep dive event, which focused on ASW 7. Initial verbal feedback from DfE colleagues was provided in advance of a fuller report that would be provided in 2-3 weeks’ time (see separate document). This was followed by a ‘process review’ of the deep dive arrangements, with suggestions for improvements and future focus.</p> <p>Due to limitations of time, discussion of progress against the remaining areas of significant weakness was curtailed. Carry over follow up points for the next monitoring meeting have been listed under each appropriate section.</p>	
Progress on the WSoA Strands	
ASW 1	The lack of a suitably ambitious SEND strategy based on robust self-evaluation, and open co-production, and with the buy-in of all services across education, health and care and that includes measurable criteria for success.
<p>Explanation of how well providers and stakeholders understand the objectives of the SEND strategy and how progress is being conveyed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the strategy has been circulated widely • Progress of the strategy is to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny in November • Priorities are to be a focus for SEND Newsletters aimed at parent-carers, along with what is being done to address the areas of significant weakness. A similar newsletter for practitioners is being considered 	

- The generation of the action plan to deliver the strategy has had a strong emphasis on coproduction and been managed to ensure the right people are able to take forward tangible changes across the SEND area
- Time has been spent on sharing and agreeing outcomes of the strategy
- Establishing a performance framework, including KPIs, and consider with whom and how the data will be shared
- The strategy has also been considered by the ICB with a request for regular updates.
- Children’s hybrid event held regularly to discuss changes and improvements
- Changing the narrative around SEND in Torbay to one of being everyone’s business and arranging services to reflect the one child service philosophy was discussed
- Agreement that DfE observers will be invited to future Board meetings

Carry over follow-up points:

- Suspensions and exclusions of CYP with SEND – what is the latest data telling us?
- Evaluation of the Autism in Schools project – how this is helping to improve outcomes for the CYP concerned.
- Progress implementing new Quality Standards for Alternative Provision.

ASW 2	The deep cultural issues leading to weak co-production and the inability of children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers to be equal partners in strategic and local decision-making.
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Remaining challenges:

- The pledge was for parent-carers to be seen as equal partners by all professionals and is being rolled out across all organisations within the local SEND partnership
- Means of gathering evidence to demonstrate the impact of the pledge is underway
- A workforce plan is in place
- Community groups/forum have not been maintained without officer support
- Engagement of ‘hard to reach’ groups of parents recognised as a significant challenge

Carry over follow-up points:

- Progress in establishing quantitative and qualitative measures of cultural shift in Torbay.

ASW 3	The lack of joint working between services, which prevents area leaders working collaboratively to secure more consistent outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.
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Quick wins since the last monitoring meeting:

- Establishment of an interagency, individual placement overview panel
- SENCO involvement in the development of a single neurodiversity pathway
- A dedicated Participation Officer
- Improving cross agency support for children EHE

Carry over follow-up points:

- What key messages are CYP with SEND giving about the services they are receiving?

ASW 4	The variability in the implementation of the graduated response (GR), leading to slow identification, high levels of exclusion, some poor inclusive practices, and inequitable access and experience of the system across education, health and care.
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Carry over follow-up points:

- Update on trends for EHCNAs, RTAs and resulting appeals to the FTT.
- Arrangements to address the needs of educational institutions in implementing the GR.

ASW 5	The poor range of opportunities and choice for children and young people with SEND when they reach 16 or transition to adulthood.
<i>Carry over follow-up points:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-16 destination data for pupils with SEN support. 	
ASW 6	The wide variances in the quality of EHC plans caused by weaknesses in joint working, fair access and the timeliness of assessments.
<i>Carry over follow-up points:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative annual 20-week performance for 2023 (to date). • Size of 'backlog' in issuing EHCPs (those not finalised within 30 weeks & 52 weeks). • Sufficiency of local specialist provision. • Health input to EHCPs 	
ASW 7	Poor joint commissioning arrangements that limit leaders' ability to meet area needs, improve outcomes and achieve cost-efficiencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See separate report 	
ASW 8	The lack of impact and of resilience to sustain improvement of recent initiatives due to low capacity in area teams.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the Council capacity has been increased • Joint funding of a consultant across the partnership • Enhanced staffing to address the backlog of annual reviews • Service manager appointed alongside the Head of SEND • Restructuring of the SEND team to ensure statutory requirements are being met • SEND employment officer appointed • Headteachers are in agreement with the LA in moving away from TAs linked to specific children to avoid over-recruitment of support staff • Consistency of SENCOs now reported • ICB reported to recognise responsibility regarding staffing in the SEND area. 	
<i>Follow-up point:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on capacity of staffing across the SEND partnership and any difficulties in recruitment. 	

Agreed actions/support following this meeting		
Action	Who	When
No additional actions were identified.		
Date and venue of next meeting		
Date and venue tbc		
Conclusion and summary information		

- The local area continues to make tangible progress across the eight areas of significant weakness.
- The value of having a 'deep dive' approach to monitoring progress was agreed.
- Though improved, challenges and risks relate to the recruitment and retention of key staff, given regional and national context.
- Governance arrangements are to be revised to include a group overseeing the implementation of SEND service improvements.
- Governance arrangements are generally working well, though the need to strengthen the engagement of education leaders at this level was noted.
- SEND leaders and key stakeholders remain fully engaged in wanting to shift the culture in Torbay and to improve local SEND services.
- The PCF is a full strategic partner, with coproduction being central to the new way of working in Torbay. It is acknowledged that greater co-production activity will require an increase in the capacity of the PCF.
- As a whole, the local partnership remains aware of the pace of change required to fully implement the WSoA and to address the areas of significant weakness identified by Ofsted/CQC. To this end, further 'deep dives' would be welcomed as part of the monitoring process.