

SELECT COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT – JANUARY 2018

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

Background

Following the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee on 17th October 2017, members requested a regular update on progress made by the educational psychology service against the action plan as previously set out. The last update was given to the committee on the 5th December 2017.

This paper addresses the following areas, which members requested:

1. The urgency of recruiting and retaining educational psychologists.
2. The length of time it was taking to improve performance.
3. Monitoring of the action plan and how improvement is being driven.
4. The details of the pilot schemes being set up
5. The impact on children and young people currently with no plan or intervention.
6. Budgeting for the service.
7. How confident the service was that it could improve

1. The urgency of recruiting and retaining educational psychologists.

The principal educational psychologist post has been filled in the interim by two experienced psychologists on a job share basis. They started on a part-time basis in December, with full-time cover being provided from 3rd January 2018. The advert to recruit a permanent principal educational psychologist attracted two candidates. Both fit the criteria for the post and will be interviewed on 24th January 2018.

They are now sufficient Educational Psychologists within the Service (17.5 full time equivalents and a number of locums) to allow us to move towards the position of having the backlog of statutory work completed and new requests for assessments being actioned in a timely manner (as outline in section 2)

A task to be completed during the Spring Term is an audit of the Service and the demands placed on it. This will result in a Service Plan which will include a description of the capacity required to meet the projected demands for both statutory and preventative work moving forward.

2. The length of time it was taking to improve performance.

There is now a refreshed plan to improve two key areas of performance. The first is to manage the backlog of unallocated educational psychology assessments. These are cases where a statutory assessment for an Education and Health Care

Plan has been agreed but the case has not yet been given to a named educational psychologist. The second is to allocate new requests for assessment to be completed within the 6 week timescale.

The backlog is reducing and as of 19th January, there were 37 cases unallocated. This is a reduction from 100 in September 2017. Projections using the capacity available currently suggest that this backlog can be cleared by May 2018.

After this time, all allocations will be made in a timely manner, giving educational psychologists the full 6 week period to complete the work, meaning all advice will be submitted within the expected timeframe.

All educational psychology assessments required for the conversion of statements of SEN to education, health and care plans have been allocated and 100% will be completed by the 31st January.

3. Monitoring of the action plan and how improvement was being driven.

The Integrated Services Board continues to monitor the performance of the educational psychology service. The interim principal educational psychologists are monitoring the impact of the recovery plan through increased management oversight, with clear timeframes and targets to demonstrate improved performance.

4. The details of the pilot schemes being set up.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Inclusion and Additional Needs (SENDIAN) pilot, as outlined in the previous update to the select committee, went live mid November. It aims to ensure children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) have their needs identified and met at an early stage, without the need to progress to an education, health and care plan unless there are complexities that make this appropriate. Over 80 schools and settings in the Aylesbury area are taking part. A frontline multi-agency team is working together to identify and meet children's needs early without the need for referrals.

Four educational psychologists (equivalent to 1 full time equivalent) have been dedicated to the pilot and these staff are offering ongoing support. There is a project plan which details how the pilot will be evaluated and the contributions of the various agencies measured.

5. The impact on children and young people with no plan or intervention.

The work to clear the backlog will mean that the assessment process can be concluded for those awaiting educational psychology reports. Once this backlog is cleared the team will be able to re-engage in the preventive, proactive and advisory work that supports schools in meeting the needs of young people with special needs.

6. Budgeting of the Service

As noted in section 1 the interim principal educational psychologists will produce a commissioning document which can be used to determine the capacity required to deliver both statutory and preventative work moving forward. This will then be used for future budget setting.

7. How confident the Service was that it could improve.

The key role of the interim principal educational psychologists is to move the service to a position where high quality professional advice is submitted in a timely manner as part of the statutory process. Capacity is then made available to support the preventive, proactive approaches that will reduce the demands for education, health and care plans. The information gathered to date shows that this will be challenging for educational psychologists as they move to different ways of working. However, the data suggest that the capacity is there, and it is apparent that there is a willingness in the service to achieve this.

There is, therefore, every confidence that service performance will improve. The first evidence of this will be the completion of all educational psychology contributions to transfer (conversion) reviews by the end of January and the reduction in the backlog of newly allocated requests for assessment. By the end of February it is anticipated that there will be evidence to demonstrate improvements in the timeliness of education psychology reports for new education, health and care plan requests.