

# **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT – MARCH 2018**

## **EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE**

### **Background**

Following the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> 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 at their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

This paper revisits 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**

It is unfortunate to report that the interviews held for Principal Educational Psychologist post did not result in an offer. Neither candidate was deemed suitable. The post had been advertised again and interviews are scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> March. One of the two interim Principal Educational Psychologists has committed to working in Buckinghamshire until the end of the Summer Term 2018.

On a more positive note, since the temporary appointment of the two interim Senior EPs, we have seen considerable improvement in practice that has cleared the backlog of cases enabling the EPs to meet their six week statutory timeline for undertaking 'Appendix D' assessments, so although our ambition is to secure a permanent post holder, we are driving improvement at pace.

There have been no changes to the number of people employed by the Educational Psychology Service since the last update. It should be noted that the number included in that paper (17.5 full time equivalents) included 2 Psychology Assistants and 4 Trainee Educational Psychologists.

A Commissioning Plan is being developed and will be presented to senior management by the end of the Spring Term 2018.

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

It is pleasing to report that the Recovery Plan has had the desired impact.

All cases where additional advice from an Educational Psychologist was requested as part of the conversion have been allocated. At the time of writing one case was outstanding as parents had not responded to repeated requests for an appointment. Following the January deadline a further 5 requests for advice were received and submission of these cases is scheduled for this Month.

All backlog cases have been allocated and this is scheduled for completion by 30<sup>th</sup> March.

As of 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, all new requests for an Educational Psychologist's report as part of the Education, Health and Care needs assessment process have been allocated with the expectation that they will be submitted within the statutory, 6 week timeframe. At the time of writing 100% of reports had been submitted on time.

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

The Service Director for Education now receives weekly reports with an updated position on all activity; this enhanced scrutiny has contributed to significant improvement as documented within this report. The focus now must be on a continued high level of performance, whilst also delivering pro-active and preventive services to schools and others.

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

The Educational Psychologists attached to SENDIAN Pilot have started to deliver against the project criteria enabling the SEN Officers to discuss potential referrals with the relevant agencies before progressing to plan. The pilot has identified some training needs for the SEN Officers that are now being prioritised within the Service. The SEND reforms introduced an expectation that services collaborate to develop a needs plan of support to children with additional needs. The SENDIAN pilot aims to alleviate pressure on the service by adopting a more preventative approach that meets the expectations of the SEND reforms. Recent SEND inspections note that meeting the statutory requirements for conversions and assessment timelines cannot be made at the expense of the quality of the

EHC plans, therefore, the objective of the pilot is to have the same level of focus on quality of provision as timeliness of support.

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

As the backlog of outstanding work is almost completed, discussions are beginning to reprioritise Educational Psychologists' time to work with schools. This will include young people who have identified difficulties but no Education, Health and Care Plan.

## **6. Budgeting of the Service**

As noted in section 1, the Interim Principal Educational Psychologists are producing a commissioning document which is being used to determine the capacity required to deliver both statutory and preventative work. This will then be used for future budget setting.

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

It is pleasing to report that the optimism detailed in the last update has been proven by the work of the Educational Psychologists this calendar year. The backlog is under control and will no longer be an issue by the end of the Spring term 2018. The Conversion work has been completed and, since, the start of the year all new requests for Educational Psychology advice have been submitted within the 6 week timeframe.

It should be noted, however, that the number of requests for advice shows no sign of slowing. It will be vital, therefore, that a focus is maintained on the timely allocation of cases to allow Educational Psychologists the maximum amount of time to plan their diaries and deliver within the 6 week window. Alongside this, the reintroduction of preventative working in schools will allow colleagues the opportunity to rebuild relationships and deliver in ways that allow needs to be met earlier.