

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel		
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	Monday 16th December at 9.30am	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:	
TITLE:	Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) Overview		
WARD:	All		
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM			
List of attachments to this report: Power Point file, EIA			

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report provides the Panel with an overview of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in B&NES.
- 1.2 This report's summary of EHCPs is drawn from dashboards managed by the Business Intelligence team and data collected by ISOS partnership as part of the safety valve plan in BANES. Regional and National data has been provided by the DFE.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel / Committee is asked to;

- 2.1 Note the national, regional and local picture regarding the increase in applications for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCPNA) and the increase in issued plans as detailed in the attached slides.
- 2.2 Be assured that Local Authority Officers continue to work strategically with social care, health, schools and other partners in order to work within statutory guidelines and support schools in delivering the very best outcomes for our children and young people.

3 THE REPORT - SUMMARY

3.1 Please refer to slides 3, 4. Locally, regionally, and nationally, the number of applications for EHCPs has increased across all education phases from early years to post 16.

4.9% of CYP in B&NES have an EHCP compared to 4.8% of CYP nationally and 5% in the Southwest. Plans have increased by 0.4% per year in B&NES for the last 4 years, showing a steady increase compared to other Local Authorities where the increase has been substantial in the last year.

This suggests that measures taken in the last year to improve decision making and panel processes have had a positive impact on mitigating the increase in plans. As part of our safety valve action plan, we have launched the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Advice service to support our schools and wider professionals in delivering the very best outcomes for our children and young people, increasing expertise within our settings working with schools to meet the needs of our young people within school's resources. We expect that this increased expertise and support in schools will reduce the number of CYP requiring an EHCP.

3.2 Please refer to slides 6, 7 and 8. These slides show the current number of applications for Needs Assessment, new EHCPs and total EHCPs over the past 5 years in B&NES.

Management of this caseload includes important work not only assessing, issuing and maintaining plans but also transitioning CYP away from them when their outcomes have been met, or they move into employment.

The service plans to focus on clearing a backlog of plans that are awaiting cessation in the new year which will create a temporary reduction in plan numbers. Long term, due to the impact of the SEND/AP advice service, we expect the number of requests for assessment to decrease.

3.3 Please refer to slide 9 The LA has a statutory duty to complete a needs assessment within a 20-week timescale. There are multiple factors that affect the completion of this process, including the availability of professional to provide advice (Health, Social Care, Therapies, Educational Psychology), local placement sufficiency and SEND caseworker capacity.

Our Parent Carers, through BPCF, tell us that the most important part of this process is to ensure a high-quality plan is written that is fit for purpose and effective, and so a balanced approach to timeliness is important. Our Quality Assurance Officer is now in place to ensure that we work collaboratively with our colleagues who provide professional advice for plans to ensure that we receive information of the highest quality allowing to produce high quality plans.

Our parents and carers have told us that along with quality plans, communication about the status of plan progress is very important, and in many cases more important than meeting the 20 week deadline. For that, and many other reasons, we are looking to implement a portal that will allow parents easy 24/7 access to their case notes so that they can check progress at a time that is convenient to

them. Our phone line continues to be available 9-5 each day for queries and to support any parent or carer who cannot access an online system.

The service has been processing a backlog of needs assessments where data quality issues have resulted in the system not recognising an issued plan despite all statutory processes being followed. As we have worked to update our systems to resolve these historic issues, this has affected our overall timeliness data which currently sits at 25% completed in 20 weeks and an average time to issue the plan of 31 weeks.

In order to better consider how the service is performing, we can consider plans that have been requested since September 2023. There has been a significant improvement in timeliness to 35% during this time, and if we consider plans requested since January 2024 a further improvement to 39%. This demonstrates the impact of service improvements during the last 18 months.

3.4 Please refer to slides 10, 11, 12 and 13 When the local authority, parents and carers are unable come to an agreement regarding assessing, issuing or the content of a plan then the Code of Practice allows the SEND tribunal (SENDIST) to be used to make that decision. We are committed to resolving disagreements prior to tribunal, and endeavour to work with Global Mediation, our Schools and other professionals to support resolution at the earliest possible opportunity.

49% of all applications to the SENDIST are resolved at mediation in B&NES. In 2013, only 2 cases were taken to full tribunal with 1 found in favour and 1 against the LA.

4 CLIMATE CHANGE

4.1 This report contains information on the assessment and issue of EHCPs. As we increase our local offer of specialist and resource base places, we expect the average commute to school for this group to decrease.

5 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 No other options have been considered for writing this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 This report has been developed with the input and consultation of the Council's BI and finance teams.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 The evidence in this report will be used to strategically inform several work streams to improve inequalities in outcomes and disproportionality. Please refer to the attached EIA.

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Background papers	N/A
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	