

**Review of SEND Arrangements in Wigan – Summary Report
June - November 2019**

In June 2019 Wigan Council initiated a focussed review of a number of features of its SEND arrangements as part of a continuous cycle of review and improvement.

This was in the context of the:

- increasing pressure on the high needs funding block and an increasing overspend
- increasing requests for Education Health and Care Plans
- increasing demand for specialist provision
- need to develop a set of new solutions in collaboration with Wigan’s families.

Wigan Council asked SEND4Change, an independent organisation to carry out this impartial review, which was focussed on specific features of the SEND local offer. These are:

- 1) The EHC pathway.
- 2) The SEND Support pathway.
- 3) The outreach service provided by special schools.
- 4) The enhanced resource provision offered by mainstream schools.
- 5) The offer made by the sensory support service.

SEND4Change facilitated a process which:

- analysed and presented financial information and SEND data
- gained an understanding of the current local offer
- listened to and considered the views of Wigan’s families and young people in order to understand the “lived experience” of those who use the local offer
- listened to and considered the views of a variety of stakeholders ranging from those who commission and provide a service to those that receive a service such as schools and settings.

The process involved large scale consultation meetings, focussed discussion groups, meetings with SEND teams, managers of SEND services and Senior Leaders and politicians in Wigan.

A great deal was learned from the listening experience and although there was much to celebrate and be proud of, there were some areas for improvement and development. There were also a few significant gaps in the service offer which need addressing. Wigan’s families made extremely valuable contributions to the discussions which have informed the thinking and outcomes presented below. Their thoughts, concerns and ideas were captured in a “parents challenge” and were presented to all of the discussion groups for consideration. The challenge to the local authority is to be able to demonstrate that it has responded positively to the issues raised by its families.

In analysing the outcomes of the five specific areas of the focussed review, it became apparent that a major rethink of the SEND pathway was required. The SEND4Change report presents the evidence for the required change and a number of recommendations. These recommendations involve reshaping and refocussing outreach services, enhanced resource provision and the sensory service. However, the changes to these services would be incorporated into a more significant reshaping of

the SEND offer in Wigan in order to achieve a more cohesive graduated and clearly understood SEND pathway.

The proposed new pathway comprises six key features. Five of the features relate to service delivery and organisation and the sixth is a “shaping tool”, the way in which Wigan shapes its local offer.

The six features of the new pathway are:

- 1) **Service providers** - the way in which specialist people who provide a service to children young people, families and settings are organised
- 2) **The Service Delivery mechanism** - the way in which services and resources can be accessed
- 3) **Assessment and Planning Processes** - the way in which children and young people with SEND are identified, assessed and planned for.
- 4) **Funding and Resources** - the way in which financial and other resources are allocated
- 5) **Education provision** - the way in which a graduated model of educational provision is offered
- 6) **Joint Commissioning, Intelligence and Engagement** - the way in which Wigan will bring about the required improvement and change through joint commissioning, intelligence and engagement activity.

The SEND Pathway

The SEND Pathway describes the overall relationship between:

- services
- resources
- processes
- places

These are the resources and arrangements that are described in the local offer that are aimed at supporting the wide spectrum of needs of children and young people with SEN and or Disability in Wigan. They provide a graduated approach with increasing intensity of response available for those with the most complex needs.

The Pathway sets out the graduated framework:

- 1) The universal offer – what is ordinarily available
- 2) The targeted offer – the SEN Support arrangements
- 3) The specialist offer – support and services accessed via an EHC plan for those with the most complex need.

Here are an overview of the set of proposals which to aim to improve the six features of the new graduated pathway;

Feature 1: Service providers - SEN and Disability Services related to children and young people should be brought together as one cohesive specialist group of services to form the new SEND Support Services.

The Sensory Service will make changes to their service offer, co-produced with parents, including increasing the sign language offer, increased use of technology, development of on-line resources, advice and information.

The outreach service from special schools will be focussed on supporting mainstream schools in improving their SEN Support offer for children with more complex needs.

SEND services and services from early help and health will increase the level of collaboration and co-ordination of their offer to families.

Feature 2: The service delivery mechanism for SEND - The report proposes that the new group of SEND services should be accessed via the service delivery footprints. Other resources, including financial resources, should be deployed through the footprints to meet local need and address local priorities.

Feature 3: SEN assessment and planning processes - This involves a significant refocus on Wigan's SEN Support arrangements and a reconsideration of the way in which EHC assessments are carried out. Currently there is a significant drift and over reliance on EHC plans. SEN Support planning processes are "invisible" and there needs to be a commonality and consistency of an SEN Support offer in schools and settings. This should include a clear description and a set of standards of what should be ordinarily available in all Wigan schools for children with SEND and this will be known as Wigan's SEN Support Offer. SEND Support Services should focus their attention on supporting schools to achieve these common standards.

The teams should be aware of what is ordinarily available in Wigan and provide advice on SEN Support to families, schools and settings. The teams should be closely associated with a specified service delivery footprint and be aware of the needs of families within "their patch". They should be sighted on the children with the most complex needs in that footprint, and where appropriate carry out a statutory EHC assessment and associated social care assessments. They will develop a relationship with professionals, mainstream schools and special schools working in that footprint and be involved in joint decision making about identifying the children with the most complex needs. Caseworkers will also be responsible for any tribunal cases on their caseload. The team will also benefit from the alignment of the Children's Targeted Disability Service and the short breaks offer. An assessment for a short break will not be dependent on comprehensive social care assessment.

Caseworkers are expected to work closely with families during the assessment process and co-produce the EHC plans.

The team should develop strong transition arrangements to adulthood and will benefit from the co-location of the Transitions Team.

The team will ensure that appropriate quality assurance arrangements are in place and that agreed outcomes are achieved.

Feature 4: Funding and Resources - Wigan will explore opportunities to deploy financial and other resources to schools and settings via the service delivery footprint mechanism, in order to empower schools to develop their inclusive arrangements.

This will include developing processes to:

- deploy top-up funding without the need for an EHC plan
- provide capital funding for developing access arrangements and mainstream plus provisions.

The LA will need to develop a process for this new funding stream which includes:

- criteria
- a budget
- an application process
- a review process.

SEND support services including Outreach services will be deployed via the footprints and a quota system and service offer will need to be determined for each footprint.

Feature 5: Provision and Placements - Wigan needs a plan to address the demand for special school placements in particular placements in independent and non-maintained special schools. Development of a more graduated set of local specialist provision both in mainstream and local specialist schools will provide the opportunity to reinvest high needs funding into more local specialist provision.

This will require the development of:

- flexible inclusive responses in local mainstream schools supported by the outreach service delivered by special schools. Mainstream schools will develop specialist elements of provision and this will be known as ‘mainstream plus’ provision and should be evident in increasing numbers of Wigan’s schools and settings.
- increased usage of existing enhanced resource provision and the development of three enhanced resource pathways between early years, primary and secondary schools.
- a review process for all Independent Non-Maintained Schools used by Wigan and the development of criteria based on exceptionality to determine any new placements.

Feature 6: Commissioning, Intelligence and Engagement - There are two components of commissioning that need to be established:

- 1) The way in which Wigan organises its commissioning arrangements in relation to education services and provision.
- 2) The way the local area shapes the local offer and jointly commissions services across education, health and care. This will be delivered through joint commissioning activity and arrangements.

SEND Business Intelligence will be at the heart of the commissioning and engagement activity for SEND. The gathering and analysing of all local knowledge on SEND is required, which will be used by the council to inform its thinking and planning SEND Services.

The Commissioning and Intelligence element of SEND Service needs to be;

- gathering and analysing SEND data
- engaging with children and families about service development
- formally commissioning services
- formally commissioning provision
- quality assuring commissioned activities and robust management of commissioned provision
- contributing to strategic joint commissioning activity with other service areas
- managing and reporting on the High Needs Budget
- managing and deploying financial resources to footprints.

Joint Commissioning and Engagement Activity. Wigan needs to develop a robust set of commissioning and engagement arrangements including:

Commissioning

- Develop a commissioning strategy
- Establish a Joint Commissioning Board
- Ensure that Commissioners across service areas know each other and work collaboratively together and with the providers
- Understand gaps and how to shape the market
- Work collaboratively across the north west

Engagement

- Develop an engagement strategy
- Ensure that parents are represented on the Commissioning Board
- Collate parents' views on key issues through the Parent Carer Forum

Outreach Provision

It is recommended that the Outreach Service from special schools will be recommissioned and focussed on supporting mainstream schools in improving their SEN Support offer for children with more complex needs.

The current model of Outreach is not as effective as it could and should be. The commissioning of the service is not subject to formal agreement with targets and desirable outcomes agreed. The level of service provided is variable and the way in which it is delivered varies from school to school. There is "in reach" and "outreach".

Enhanced Resource Provision

It is recommended that Wigan should:

1. Improve clarity on funding
2. Develop a more strategic approach to commissioning of places
3. Create pathways between phases
4. Increase the number of utilised resourced places for ASD
5. Develop a pathway of ASD resource base provision in Leigh
6. Improve networks between ERPs and with special schools
7. Ensure the specialist equipment available in RP are fully utilised and available for the community.

Sensory Support Service

It is recommended that following a period of consultation with service users and the service providers, the Sensory Service will make changes to their service offer. This includes; increasing the sign language offer, increased use of technology, development of on-line resources, advice and information.