

Meeting with Tim Armstrong

12 December 2018, at Moorfoot

In attendance: Julie Chambers, Tim Armstrong, Tarun Ghosh, Katie Monette, Laura Gillespie, Eva Juusola (notes)

Apologies: Stephen Betts, Scarlett Milward

EHC Plans

The issue: New templates for the My Plan and EHC plans have recently been rolled out. Parents asked whether ALL EHCPs could now be exported into Word format, or just those based on the new template?

Answer: Tim clarified that only EHCPs which use the new template can be exported as Word documents. To request changes to an old-style EHC plan as part of an annual review process, notes should be written on a printout. There is no current plan to reformat plans based on the old template due to the time and resource this would take.

The issue: The LA is taking a long time to amend EHC plans following an **annual review**. The quality of annual reviews depends on the quality of the school staff running them. Schools don't always follow due process, e.g. reports are not circulated at least two weeks before the meeting. Parents and schools are not clear which types of changes to an EHC plan requested at an annual review require additional evidence, and which do not. Parents asked what information the LA provided to schools around annual reviews – is there a checklist?

Work to be done: Tim explained that additional evidence is needed if there are requests for significant changes, e.g. an increase in support hours. **Tim will produce further guidance for schools regarding annual reviews overtime.** Annual reviews were part of the recent training for SENCOs about the graduated approach.

The issue: Parents have been told that SENDSARS can't force schools to **implement an EHCP**. Some have also been advised that, if their child's EHC plan is not being implemented, they should take the school to court. However, the duty to ensure that the provision described in section F is made rests with the LA. How can the LA comply with this duty if schools are under no obligation to deliver the provision described in the plan? What should parents do if their child's EHCP is not being implemented?

Work to be done: Tim confirmed that the legal duty rests with the local authority, but advised that the local authority's influence over schools (especially academies) is limited. Parents should raise concerns with the school in the first instance. They could also raise the issue with the Regional Schools Commissioner for academies. **The LA will produce tools/guidance for schools that will give them a better understanding of what their notional SEN budget is, and what they are expected to use it for.** Schools have been reminded as part of training about their responsibility to implement provision in EHC Plans.

Co-production Charter

The issue: Work on the charter has stalled. All had agreed to send suggestions following the last discussion.

Work to be done: Katie suggested that the draft charter could be submitted to the Inclusion Improvement Board in January to get some feedback. This would need to be a facilitated session, rather than an invitation to comment.

SENDIAS

The issue: There is a staff training need so that the service can provide more support in relation to health and social care services.

Work to be done: Tarun suggested that SENDSARS could ask parents for permission to share their details with SENDIAS as soon as a request for an EHC needs assessment is received. Parents would be able to opt out. However, there are already capacity issues in the service. All agreed that it would be useful if someone from SENDIAS could attend the KITs.

Requests for respite

The issue: Parents are not clear what the process for requesting overnight respite is.

Work to be done: Tim explained that such requests should go to the Safeguarding Hub, OR to SNIPS or the Children with Disabilities Team if the family is already accessing support from these agencies.

Tim to ask Helen Sweaton about the access routes for young adults, and families who are already accessing MAST. Eva to include this information on the Local Offer once approved.

New special free school

The issue: The new special free school run by Nexus is not likely to open until 2020. The LA has submitted a bid for a second special free school. The idea is that one of the schools would cater for pupils with social communication difficulties and challenging behaviour, and the other for pupils with social communication difficulties and anxiety. Parents asked whether the LA could actually influence the kind of cohorts the schools would cater for – wouldn't they be limited to commissioning places?

Answer: Tim explained that the LA can identify a cohort and commission a school, and open this provision up to other LAs.

State of Sheffield survey

The issue: Over 600 responses have been received to date. The majority of the respondents are female, but there is a good spread across postcodes, and around half of respondents are in receipt of means-tested benefits. White British respondents, and parents of children with a primary impairment of ASD are overrepresented.

Work to be done: SPCF will try to address this by extending the deadline (to 18th January) and promoting the survey to underrepresented groups.

Eva will analyse the responses and compare them with findings from the survey four years ago. It is possible to filter by answers to specific questions, e.g. we could only look at responses from parents of children with My Plans. **Tim will find out if the LA would be able to provide support to SPCF with the analysis. The findings from the survey will be fed into the improvement plan.**

Other

SEN Transport: Parents said that photos of the children should be included on the run sheets. If a child with a medical condition is travelling with a relief driver and escort, staff need a photo to be able to identify the child in order to follow their emergency protocol. Parents asked if Personal Profiles could be shared with SEN Transport? **Tim agreed that this was a sensible idea, and will discuss it with Paul Johnson.**

Future in Mind: Parental awareness of the Future in Mind programme and the Healthy Minds framework is low. Some parents of children attending schools who are taking part in the pilot remember filling in a survey, but have not received any feedback or more information from school. Parents asked why special schools were not included in this project, and whether any colleges were taking part. **Tim to ask Matt Peers to explain what parents should expect from a Healthy Minds school.**

Additional actions:

- **Tim to send exemplar of Support Plan for inclusion on Local Offer website once this has been signed off**
- **Tim to invite Katie to Graduated Approach training**